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AUTHOR Filby, Nikola N., Ed.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The result of a collaborative effort to meet the needs of California educators in middle-grades reform, this volume provides access to the best ideas in research and practice, and support for local improvement efforts. The casebook format tells the strategies, problems, and diverse actions of educators focusing on the "how" of leading a school into and through the change process. A nautical metaphor captures much of what is known about school change using the following six elements: (1) getting launched; (2) establishing a destination; (3) supporting the crew; (4) navigating; (5) ports of call; and (5) not alone at sea. Editor-written text introduces research-based concepts and suggests key issues to think about. Complementing this are case descriptions written by California educators about California middle-grades education that provide concrete examples. Comments and discussion questions help stimulate analysis. (MLF)

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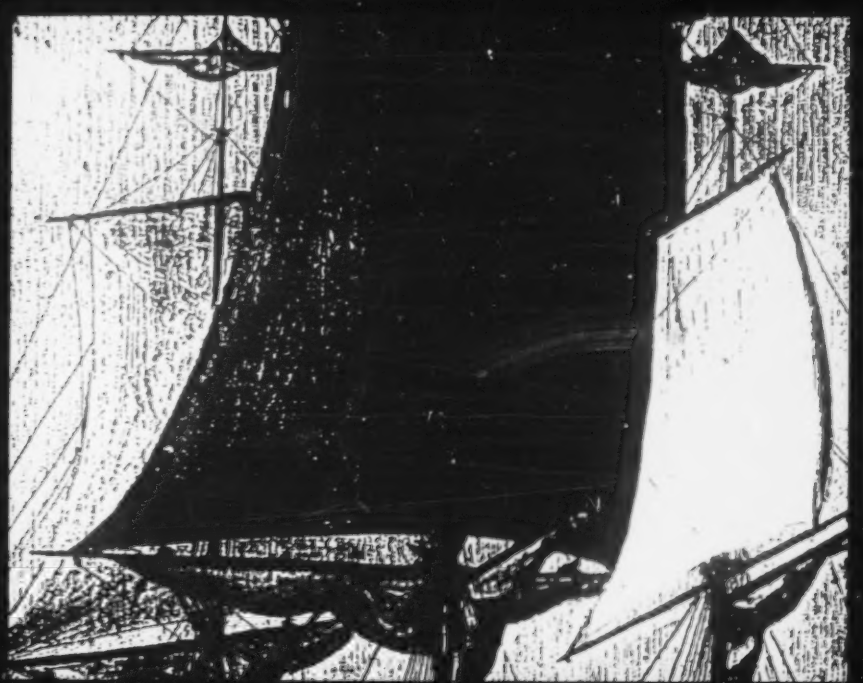

a Casebook for School Leaders

EA 022 723

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MIDDLE GRADES REFORM:

A CASEBOOK FOR

SCHOOL LEADERS

Edited by:

Nikola N. Filby
Ginny V. Lee
Vicki Lambert

Far West Laboratory

May, 1990

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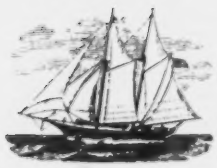

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Preface

Middle grades reform is an important and growing movement in California and, indeed, across the nation. Since the publication of the Middle Grades Task Force report, *Caught in the Middle*, schools throughout California have been reassessing their approach to education. Are there different and better ways to meet the needs of those preadolescent youngsters? What are people doing that works? How can we in our school move ahead to make significant changes?

This volume represents a collaborative effort to meet the needs of California educators as they address such questions. Two years ago, representatives of Far West Laboratory and of the County/State Steering Committee, the curricular arm of the California Association of County Superintendents of Schools, met to plan a new collaborative project. Both organizations share a common purpose — to assist local educators in the process of school improvement by providing access to the best ideas in research and practice and support for local improvement efforts. At the time, the middle grades reform movement was being launched; today it is still gaining momentum. The decision was made to combine forces to provide resource materials and training to assist the 3,425 middle grades schools in their journey.

Casebooks such as this are a Far West Laboratory specialty. Beginning with earlier volumes such as the *Mentor Teacher Casebook*, the Laboratory established a practice of recording the experiences of educators in their own words. So much of the practical wisdom of the field remains in the minds of individuals, while others seek answers and, at best, reinvent the wheel. This casebook tells the stories of California educators who have gone about reform — their strategies, their problems, their diverse actions. It will be, we hope, a significant tool in support of middle grades reform around the state.

The 58 county offices of education have been partners at all stages in the production of the volume, participating in planning, data collection, design, and training development. Through county efforts, the voices in the volume come from throughout the state — large schools and small, rural and urban, "middle schools" and K-8 configurations. Most important of all, the casebook will be a tool used by county offices as they provide continued assistance to local schools.

We are pleased that the collective resources of our two organizations could be turned toward this significant reform opportunity. We wish the readers well in their efforts to better meet the needs of middle grades children.

Jean Holbrook

Jean Holbrook
Chair
County/State Steering Committee of
the California Association of
County Superintendents of Schools

Dean Nafziger
Executive Director
Far West Laboratory for
Educational Research
and Development

May, 1990

Acknowledgments

This casebook is a joint project of Far West Laboratory and the county offices of education. The County/State Steering Committee of the California Association of County Superintendents of Schools recognized the need for such a document during planning sessions with the Laboratory in 1986. A subcommittee was established to oversee the project. The committee members, representing the county offices, the California Department of Education, Far West Laboratory, and professional organizations, have provided direction and insight throughout the process. Committee members include:

Jon Scharer, Committee Chair, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum/Instruction, Office of the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

John Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Stanislaus County Department of Education

Joe Silveira, Assistant County Superintendent of Educational Services, Office of the Merced County Superintendent of Schools

Bob Watanabe, Director of Research, Evaluation and Curriculum Services, Contra Costa County Office of Education

Sharon-Ann Croughwell, Curriculum Coordinator, Riverside County Office of Education and Office of the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

Mary Ann Overton, Consultant, Office of Middle Grades Support Services, California Department of Education

Sallie L. Wilson, Consultant, Office of School Improvement, California Department of Education.

Nikola Filby, Senior Program Director, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

Ginny Lee, Program Director, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

Laurel Kanthak, Chair, Middle Grades Committee, Association of California School Administrators

Carl Zon, President, California League of Middle Schools

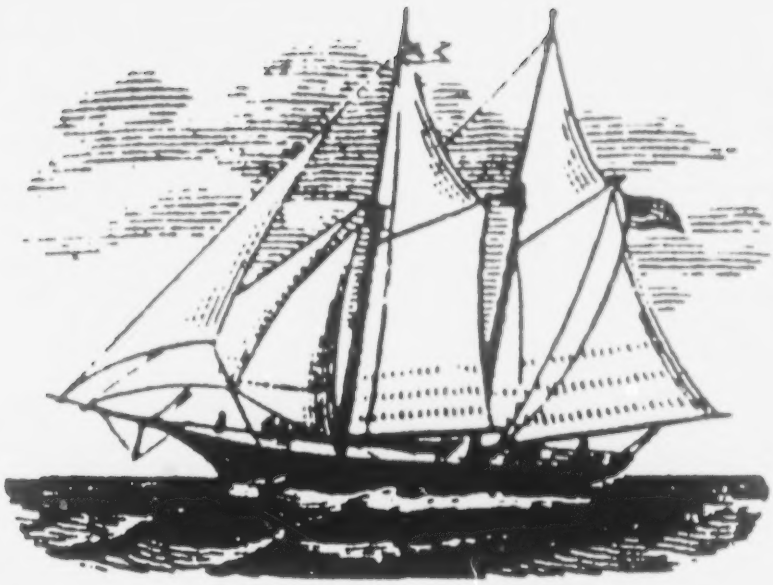
A number of county office staff members contributed actively to the book. County office staff attended an orientation session about the project and were trained to collect case descriptions. The richness and variety of the descriptions of California educators in action are due to the efforts of county staff in locating and soliciting entries. Case descriptions were also contributed by members of the California League of Middle Schools and by Janet Kierstead, a member of the California Middle Grades Task Force.

The work of producing the written document fell to Far West Laboratory support staff. The capable attention of Stephen Perkins and Karl Bates allowed us to go through multiple drafts and formats to improve clarity and readability. The style of the final book is to their credit.

The case descriptions in the book are anonymous. The nature of the volume made it impossible to provide very much detail about any one site. Instead, the intent was to highlight a significant part of the process of change at that site. We felt that identifying sites might be misleading, because of insufficient information, or detract from consideration of the case itself. But we want to acknowledge most strongly the contributions of the schools! They all impressed us with the dedication they show toward excellence for their students. Unstintingly they provided their time and ideas toward this casebook. Some wrote their own cases; others talked with a county or FWL staff person who wrote up the case from interview data. School personnel remained congenial as we continued to contact them with questions during the editing process. They have our deepest appreciation!

Case material was received from the following schools:

Albany Middle School, Albany (Alameda Co.)
Bancroft Junior High, San Leandro (Alameda Co.)
Bartlett Intermediate, Porterville (Tulare Co.)
Bradley Elementary School, Bradley (Monterey Co.)
Crocker Middle School, Hillsborough (San Mateo Co.)
Dairyland Elementary School, Chowchilla (Madera Co.)
DeAnza Middle School, Ventura (Ventura Co.)
Divisadero Middle School, Visalia (Tulare Co.)
Douglas Middle School, Douglas, Wyoming
Fort Miller Middle School, Fresno (Fresno Co.)
Los Cerros Intermediate, Danville (Contra Costa Co.)
Margarita Middle School, Temecula (Riverside Co.)
Mesa Elementary, Somis (Ventura Co.)
Palm Desert Middle School, Palm Desert (Riverside Co.)
Pinacate Middle School, Perris (Riverside Co.)
Pine Valley Intermediate, San Ramon (Contra Costa Co.)
Pioneer Junior High, Porterville (Tulare Co.)
Raymond Cree Middle School, Palm Springs (Riverside Co.)
Riverview Middle School, Helendale (San Bernardino Co.)
Shandin Hills Middle School, San Bernardino (San Bernardino Co.)
Somis Elementary, Somis (Ventura Co.)
Southridge Middle School, Fontana (San Bernardino Co.)
Stone Valley Elementary, Alamo (Contra Costa Co.)
Taylor Middle School, Millbrae (San Mateo Co.)
Terrace Hills Junior High, Colton (San Bernardino Co.)
Turlock Junior High, Turlock (Stanislaus Co.)
Willard Junior High, Berkeley (Alameda Co.)
Wilson Elementary, Chowchilla (Madera Co.)
Wilson Elementary, Exeter (Tulare Co.)
Woodside Elementary, Woodside (San Mateo Co.)
Yucaipa Middle School, Yucaipa (San Bernardino Co.)



Introduction

This is a book about school leadership for middle grades reform. In the state of California and the nation as a whole, increasing attention is being directed to meeting the unique educational needs of youngsters in the middle grades. The California Middle Grades Task Force report, *Caught in the Middle*, paints a vivid picture of the characteristics of these students and of the kind of education best suited to meet their needs. These topics are addressed as well in the Carnegie Foundation report, *Turning Points*, and in the literature developed over the past twenty years by educators who have pursued a better education in the middle grades. All agree that some major changes are in order if we are to provide the best and most appropriate education for middle-grades students.

There are two things to think about when implementing middle grades reform: one is the idea of "what" a middle school really is; the other is "how" does one lead a school into and through the change process? This book focuses especially on the "how." Research on school change and the experiences of California educators provide some guidance on successful reform efforts. This book draws on these sources to assist school leaders as they orchestrate long term change efforts. It provides some insights to the question, "How do we get there from here?"

Not surprising to anyone who knows schools, there is no easy answer to the question, "How do we get there from here?" Schools are complex places; the changes called for are multi-faceted; the process takes a long time. There are some general principles or concepts that emerge repeatedly in studies of school change, but these concepts manifest themselves in a wide variety of ways in different sites, even at different points of time in the same site. The process of change is recursive and interrelated, and takes on the individual flavor of the specific school context.

What this book offers is a way to think about middle grades change. Leaders of a change effort need to hold several things in mind simultaneously. They need to consider the "big picture" of what they are trying to accomplish. They also need to consider various strategies for achieving the desired results within that "big picture." This means having a broad repertoire of techniques that can be applied to support planning, decision making, problem solving, and moving ahead. How a school "gets there from here" is not a simple, linear progression of steps, and the process will be unique at each site.

This book is organized to foster some ways of thinking about middle grades change, not only the big picture and the question of getting from here to there, but also how the various components of middle grades reform could be applied at a particular site. To create a vehicle that guides readers in a fairly simple fashion through a very complex process, we have developed a nautical metaphor. We have a ship, a captain, and a crew, all joined together on a journey across the sea. Although the metaphor is simplistic and may not tap into everyone's experiential backlog, it does serve to keep some essential elements clearly defined and to give us a manageable way of looking at a very diverse process. This metaphor captures much of what is known about school change and communicates it in a way that encourages the mind to play with the ideas and apply them creatively.

The book includes two kinds of text. There is editor-written text that elaborates on the nautical metaphor, introducing research-based concepts and suggesting key issues to think about. Complementing this text are case descriptions written by and about California middle-grades educators. These cases illustrate the elements of the metaphor by making the abstract elements of change more concrete. They show the variety of ways real people have acted in their specific circumstances. They provide concrete examples of the ideas. Some of the cases are short and illustrate a specific concept. Others are longer and show how the elements of

school change interrelate and weave together over time in a recursive manner. Comments and discussion questions help stimulate analysis.

This book is intended to speak to many audiences in many ways. For some, it will be a resource; for others, a stimulus or inspiration. For all, it should provide a lot of ideas and an impetus for action. It should also serve as a comfort to school leaders, a reassurance that the change process can be undertaken even though the challenge appears overwhelming and difficult.

One of the best ways you can use this book is as a connection with others who face the same challenge of middle grades reform. Give it to a colleague. Discuss parts of it in a faculty meeting. Use it in staff development. Talk about it in a principals' meeting. Debate. Analyze. Argue. Expand. Elaborate. Suggest alternatives. The more this book is dissected and discussed, the deeper the understandings will be and the more its ideas will be applied to your own school.

What is the meaning of middle grades reform? To some people, it means assigning students of grades 6, 7, and 8 to one building called a "middle school." Others would point to the document *Caught in the Middle*, with its 22 recommendations, and talk about features such as core curriculum, interdisciplinary teaming, teacher advisement, or a carefully planned transition from an elementary school organization to that of the high school. While all of these characterizations **may** be found, they are **not** what defines or captures the essence of middle grades reform. Rather, the emphasis is first and foremost on dedication to meeting the physical, psychological, and social — as well as academic — needs of pre-adolescent youngsters. This philosophy, this dedication to students, provides a rationale for designing the school with specific features. But it is not a simple translation. Different schools express the philosophy in different ways. They design the school program in a wide variety of ways to accommodate the specific characteristics of their students, faculty, and site. And they keep working over time to improve their capacity to do their best for the students.

This point is nicely illustrated in an anecdote told about Mark Twain: Twain, a colorful speaker in many ways, was fond of using profanities; his wife, however, did not care for such language. One day, in an attempt to cure him, she let loose a string of profanities with the hope that hearing how such language sounded to others would convince him to stop. Instead, Twain turned to her and said, "Woman, you've got the words but you sure ain't got the tune." Similarly, a middle school that focuses on program features and loses sight of the underlying purpose and philosophy will be lacking the "tune."

Because the middle school concept represents a philosophy or point of view rather than a set of specific features, talking about implementing middle grades reform

cannot be reduced to a formula, set of steps, or list of ingredients. Furthermore, not only are there many ways to "be" a middle school, there are even more ways to "get there." We would like to suggest that a helpful way of thinking about middle grades reform is in terms of a metaphor. Given all the variation that exists in what middle schools look like and how that happens, it is helpful to think of implementing middle grades reform as undertaking a journey. We would like to use the metaphor of a nautical journey, with a captain and crew (principal and staff) sailing their vessel (the school and its students) toward a destination. Reaching the destination depends on many factors; some of these are known at the outset and some are not. Some can be changed; others can be anticipated and prepared for; some will be surprises. The successful captain responds to the changing conditions of the journey in ways that keep the ship heading in the right direction, making midcourse corrections as needed.

In this document we use the metaphor of a nautical journey to look at some of the important factors in implementing middle grades reform. Using this metaphor helps us capture the variation that exists in the "real world" of middle grades reform as reported by the many contributors to this volume. By looking across many vessels that are sailing, or have sailed, the seas toward the "land of middle schools," and by comparing and contrasting their journeys, we can illustrate the commonalities and provide examples of some of the specifics.

The journey toward middle grades reform can begin in many ways. **Getting Launched** can happen as a result of direct orders to the captain: "The district decided we should become a middle school." In other instances, the captain's own initiative is the key: "I wanted to explore the middle grades reform ideas and see what they could mean for my school." In some cases, the captain comes on board midway through the journey or is assigned to the ship for the specific purpose of making the journey happen. A successful launch requires the captain to assess the context, read people's readiness, and consider his or her own leadership style as

well. The way in which the journey begins influences other activities and decisions during the voyage.

Whatever impetus propels a school to launch its journey toward middle grades reform, it is important for the captain and crew to decide together where they are going. **Establishing a Destination** as a group is important to the success of the journey. Since middle schools do not all look alike, the captain and crew must discuss and decide together what their destination will be. This shared vision provides focus to the journey; it allows the crew to avoid aimless drifting or working at cross purposes.

While the captain has the ultimate responsibility for the vessel, he or she depends on the work of the crew to keep the ship afloat and moving. **Supporting the Crew** is an important responsibility for the captain. At the outset, for individuals to be able to agree on a destination, the crew must buy in to the proposed direction of travel. Once underway, the captain wants to make the best use of the crew, to help them do their jobs well, and to keep them on track. Moreover, the skilled captain knows the importance of good first mates; he or she develops, encourages, and depends on the leadership skills of others to help sail the ship. Successful management of all of the tasks required to make the journey depends on the contributions of everyone; the teamwork of the entire group becomes especially significant when the vessel encounters problems.

If implementing middle grades reform is like undertaking a sea voyage, then **Navigating** is one of the critical skills that the captain and crew need to demonstrate. This means monitoring progress toward the destination, making midcourse corrections, responding to changing conditions, and using policies and procedures appropriately to guide the vessel in the desired direction. Moreover, when conditions are not smooth, when the seas are rough or the ship develops mechanical difficulties, captain and crew must respond quickly and effectively.

We have suggested that there is not a recipe or set of steps for implementing middle grades reform. In the language of our metaphor, this means that the captain and crew may choose to stop at various **Ports of Call** during their voyage. Some vessels, for example, visit at ports such as *Instructional Teaming* or *Advisory Period*. At each port, cargo or supplies are taken on board to be used in the continuing journey. Not all vessels stop at all possible ports of call, nor is there a fixed sequence for visiting these various ports. There are, however, some logical considerations that the captain uses in thinking about which ports to visit and in what order.

Finally, while the discussion thus far has talked about the vessel as a self-contained unit, the reality of sailing is that the captain and crew are **Not Alone at Sea**. Other ships are making similar journeys; modern communication devices link the ship with other vessels and with people on land; information is available from weather satellites. It is important for captain and crew to remember that their journey can benefit from the links that they maintain throughout the journey.

The metaphor of a nautical journey is helpful not only in representing some of the factors in implementing middle grades reform but also in capturing the idea that these factors do not exist independently of each other. We have introduced them separately and sequentially and will discuss them at greater length in separate sections because this is helpful for analytical purposes. In the real world of implementing reform, however, these variables occur and recur in complex patterns of interaction. In the language of the metaphor, the captain is simultaneously navigating, looking after the crew, considering what kind of seas lie ahead, and thinking about the messages being received on the radio. Day-to-day operations and progress are examined with respect to the original navigational plan and the changing conditions; the original intended destination may be replaced by a more appropriate one. In the case of the middle school administrator, what guides this nautical journey is the middle school philosophy. To illustrate some of the

ways in which the elements of our proposed metaphor interact and recur, the next section presents a case of one middle school's reform effort with notes and questions to stimulate thought and analysis. Using the nautical metaphor to examine the story of **Crystal Middle School** illustrates some of the real-world complexity of school reform; it points out how aspects of the reform process recur over time, and it demonstrates that the boundaries between these aspects are not necessarily sharp ones. Moreover, the metaphor provides school personnel with a tool for developing a shared language, a language which allows them to talk about both the whole and each of the pieces of the whole as they go through the process of implementing middle grades reform.

To support readers in applying the metaphor, we discuss and illustrate each of its elements in detail in the chapter called *Variations on a Theme*. This chapter enhances the use of the metaphor as a tool, and it also provides numerous examples from California middle-level schools which capture the variety of what these elements look like in practice. The schools differ in terms of context: large or small; urban or rural; K-8, 6-8, or 7-9. They also differ in the ways they have interpreted and applied the components of reform.

Finally, to bring readers back to the whole, to the recursive complexity of reform, the last chapter presents lengthy descriptions of two schools which have undertaken major middle level change efforts. These *Ship's Logs* are presented without notes or commentary to be used in ways which will vary for each reader. It is hoped that they will provide stimulation, inspiration, and encouragement.

Preview to Reading About Crystal

In this rich and detailed case of **Crystal Middle School** we have provided two levels of analysis for you to consider and study. On one level, we have provided left-marginal-delineations of the component parts of the nautical metaphor. There are obviously loose boundaries to these definitions, but our intention is for you to see how the metaphor applies and how its components are interrelated and recursive. We may not have highlighted all instances in the case. You could probably make an argument for some of the delineations to fit another component of the metaphor. At any rate, we are hoping that you will use this to assist you as you think about change and discuss the process with colleagues.

On another level, we have interrupted the case story frequently to bring your attention to specific ideas and to ask questions that will stimulate a more thorough analysis, not only of this case, but of your own. These questions are ones we hope you will ask as you read other cases in this book. They are not the only questions that might be asked. You will probably think of many more as you read, which would please us immensely. Use these questions as a beginning point for thought, for analysis, for discussion, for brainstorming actions that might be taken in your school.

A SCHOOL IN TRANSITION:
Crystal Middle School

Our middle school was officially declared a middle school two years ago. Yet since 1970, as an intermediate school, we have served sixth-seventh- and eighth-grade students. Because there was not enough room for K-6 students at the elementary school, the sixth-grade students were included here. Staff and administration worked hard to make the sixth graders feel they were a part of the rest of the school, rather than cast-offs. We recognized that these students were in need of special nurturing and support, and we made many efforts to see they got it. As a result, we became more nurturing and supportive of the rest of our students as well. We really feel that we were ahead of *Caught in the Middle* in this respect.

Getting Launched

In the fall of 1987, the Superintendent and Board gave direction that our intermediate school staff and administration begin to look at the concepts described in *Caught in the Middle*, and to submit a three-year-plan for incorporating those concepts. Simultaneously, the Superintendent and Board received funding from the state to implement a thirty-year building renovation plan for our school. We desperately needed a major refurbishing, as well as an additional, new school to assist with our growing student population. The combination of the request to incorporate middle school concepts into our curriculum and the opportunity to refurbish and build gave us the impetus to begin a large sweep in terms of change.

Establishing a Destination

The Superintendent and Board requested our input into the building changes that were needed at Crystal. We were asked to develop plans for what we would desire in the building. Looking at what we wanted in our building necessitated becoming involved in the whole idea of change in our curriculum, our focus, and our instruction. The timing for looking at *Caught in the Middle* was perfect. We were forced to evaluate/reevaluate our program and to look at the research and writings related to the middle school concept versus the traditional intermediate school.

At what point do you consider this school to have launched its journey? What answer would the principal give? The district superintendent? A teacher? What does that imply about the process of getting launched?

Why would consideration of space be an important part of planning for middle school reform?

Considering space and program at the same time can be both an opportunity and a liability. Look at the aspects of each as you read the rest of the case. How much is too much?

To start the planning process, our administrative team put together a three-year-plan that broadly defined direction. The first year included research, visits, and establishment of goals and objectives. The second year required continued visitations and prioritizing of our goals and objectives. The third year mandated implementation of the ultimate plan.

Establishing a Destination

Navigating

We communicated our plan to staff, to students, to parents, to PTA, and to many school committees, including SIP (School Improvement Program) and department chairs. We felt it was important to involve everyone; we valued everyone's input and realized that it would take a team effort to get the job done. We made sure that we made connections with our plans for building renovation to insure that everyone understood why it was valuable for us to go through this process now, not later, after the building changes had been made.

Supporting the Crew

Why do you think the administrative team developed a broad plan prior to talking with staff and other parties?

Note that communication included parents and students. Would you have involved them this early?

At our first planning meeting, a simulation was enacted to demonstrate the use of group intelligence and to provide a model. Teams worked together to solve the problem of how many jelly beans were in a jar. Some individuals worked alone, rather than in a group. The results found the team estimates to be much more accurate than those done by the individuals working independently. This clearly demonstrated the value of team interaction and decision making. Many staff members were surprised by the innovative and insightful ways others suggested to solve the problem. As a result, teachers' respect for one another increased. In addition, teams were drawn together in verbal interaction in a way which, for many, was the first participation in meaningful dialogue with other staff members. This dialogue opened the way for the discussion of old problems, destroying several myths that had been "around the school" for a long time. Many new relationships were developed. Because of the powerful outcomes of this first meeting, all our other planning meetings were designed to build upon this one, using a similar format.

Supporting the Crew

As a staff, we immersed ourselves in reading and discussing as much literature on middle schools as we could find. Moreover, we wanted to know what some of these ideas looked like in practice, so several of our teachers visited a couple of schools in another city to see what they were doing, to talk about how they prioritized their needs, and to discuss how they made their choices: what did they do first, what followed, why?

Ports of Call

Not Alone

Several staff members also attended some workshops on middle schools. We also put on several in-services, conducted by Dr. Bondi.

Establishing a Destination

Our department chairs worked with a committee of students, staff, and PTA members to develop our mission statement. Essentially, what we determined was that we would accept the responsibility to provide an essential body of knowledge to students that would allow them to function in an ever-expanding world and provide them with opportunities to enhance their self-esteem and self-worth. Because staff was involved in various ways through the development of this statement, we all felt comfortable with the final statement as it was shared during a faculty meeting. This committee went on to outline the direction we should be moving in and the elements of middle school that should be implemented.

Supporting the Crew

Navigating

Ports of Call

Our PTA and SIP committee then developed and distributed a survey that served to help staff prioritize the major components of our new middle school program. As a result of the survey, it was determined that we would begin our reform efforts through teaming. Although we wanted teams in all three grade levels, we felt it was important to progress in a way that gave our students the nurturing they were accustomed to in elementary school yet prepared them for the less bonded rigor of high school. We decided to keep our sixth graders in a self-contained configuration, yet teamed the teachers into four teams of four with common planning time. (This has been a real hassle to schedule, but we have managed to do it.) In teams, the teachers have the flexibility of working together and moving children between one another when they feel it is beneficial. We redesigned our seventh grade so students would have a core program built around interdisciplinary teams, and a nine-week exploratory program. We determined to keep our eighth grade on a period-by-period rotational program, but again, we formed teams. We have two eighth-grade teams that work together, with some curriculum cross-over.

How did the first team simulation lay the foundation for the work which followed? Why did this principal consider this to be important? What else might he have done?

What do you think of the mission statement that was developed? Does it express "middle-school-ness"? What would you add or take out?

Notice how the principal involved various groups in the planning process. Do you think this staff was at a readiness level for change? Why?

Because we felt we had accomplished what we had been asked to do, we took our plan to the Board. We also approached them with a rationale for changing our name officially to "middle school," and got permission. We outlined for them our plan for interdisciplinary teaming and monthly team planning/development meetings. They were very supportive and encouraged us to continue. It was at this point that we decided to set up a task force to provide articulation between our school and the district. At least one teacher from each department was selected to serve on this committee. Every nine weeks we submit a report to the Superintendent and Board which relates our progress toward implementation of the middle school concepts.

Establishing a Destination

Navigating

Supporting the Crew

We now hold monthly planning meetings which are quite different from our previous faculty meetings, which were designed primarily for information dissemination. We set up our meetings so that on days when we have work to do to develop curriculum which crosses content areas and which can be used in a team environment, we put our "TEAM" signs out on the tables and everyone knows to sit with their team members. On days when we have work to do that is best done in a departmental structure, we put our "DEPARTMENT" signs out and everyone sits by departments. This has proven to be a very successful exchange between the two structures.

Navigating

We applied for SIP funding and when we received it, we determined to use all our monies to provide materials, planning time, and visitation time. We determined not to purchase personnel, as these costs continue to go up while funds seem to remain the same or, more frequently, decrease over the years. We purchase materials only on the official adoption cycle so they can be used for a maximum period of time. We frequently fund released days for teachers so they can attend workshops, visit other schools, or plan with their teams or departments.

Not Alone

Supporting the Crew

Several information exchange channels are established. As you read on, think about how these structures serve as support for the staff. How do they further the change process in terms of leadership, motivation, buy-in, and commitment?

As an administrative team, we have had many problems to cope with along the way, both with the building changes and with the middle school curriculum/concept changes. Incorporating the building work that needed to be done into our daily schedule was difficult at best. We had to move over twenty teachers and students out of their classrooms. It was a major undertaking and had a huge impact on our morale and on our organization.

Navigating

It was frustrating to have to go through the upset in being displaced, hearing all the building noise, putting up with paint smells, etc., but we all recognized that the ultimate end product would more than compensate for our hardships. Most of the major work is done now, but we still have a lot to do with our curriculum.

Supporting the Crew

Probably the one thing that has made the greatest impact on staff and students, through both changes, has been our regular and frequent communication. We make sure that we keep everyone informed along the way as to what is going on and what will be happening next. The fact that staff and students know what is happening makes a big difference.

Supporting the Crew

We also make sure that we provide lots of recognition, appreciation, and rewards to the staff for what they are doing. For example, we frequently write thank-you notes; we include highlights of teachers in the monthly school newsletter; and we do special treats around holidays. We love sending out valentines in February. Our PTA also helps out, bringing in snacks on planning days and writing regular appreciation and support statements. Our student service clubs recognize staff members several times a year with small gifts and notes which say "thank you" once again for dedication and a job well done. We plan all activities which have to do with the change process during the school day so that teachers don't feel it a burden to participate and be involved. Our SIP monies, and recently, our lottery funds, have made this possible. In everything we do, we try to convey the sense that we value our staff.

Not Alone

Supporting the Crew

Another way we communicate how much we value staff has been to make sure that we are accessible. We keep our office doors open and make appointments immediately when they are requested. If an issue comes up, we react to resolve it as soon as possible. Maximum effort is put forth immediately to determine the accuracy of the information, to provide this information to all necessary parties, to develop solutions, and to support the person(s) willing to share their concern(s). We strive to provide a general attitude of respect, regardless of the issue, the complaint, the problem, or whatever, is brought to our attention. If someone has something that she or he feels needs to be brought up, we make every effort to be available right away; we do not have the person make an appointment, or wait until a later time. Providing as many opportunities as possible for staff to interact with staff has been very helpful for bringing up issues and concerns and getting things out into the open.

This principal used a number of communication strategies. What needs of staff was he trying to address? How would you rate the effectiveness of these communication strategies?

With our new curriculum, we have made a point of providing mentor teachers and educational workshops for assistance. For example, many new teachers, and even some of the "old" ones, need help with drug education, art curriculum, and new teaching methodologies, including cooperative learning, synectics, collaborative learning, jigsawing, etc., just to name a few.

Supporting the Crew

Ports of Call

We really feel good about what we have accomplished at Crystal Middle School over the last two years. We have worked hard, but it has been worth it. Our building has improved dramatically and supports us in our new "middle school work" with students. It was nice to have the opportunity to work on both the building and the new concepts at the same time.

We are presently getting into the whole issue of teaming in a very serious way — not just the formation of teams, but teaming in a manner which crosses content areas. It's not easy for people to work on team projects across curriculum areas when they have been working independently or in departments. It's a whole new way of thinking for them, and it's hard.

Ports of Call

It would be very easy for us, as administrators, to simply force them into doing it, but I think we realize that that's not going to be terribly productive. It's like taking a trip somewhere. We could tell them that this is where we're going, then put them into the vehicle and physically force them into submission. We could even give them all the rationales for why it would be beneficial to go to "X," and perhaps even "mock it up" about how much "fun" it would be to go there, but whether they truly bought into our notions would be difficult to tell. I think we'd have more trouble than we could ever anticipate.

Supporting the Crew

What we are doing instead is making a commitment, as a staff, to look at the notion of teaming over the next six months. We are looking at alternatives that are available to us, selecting those that look like they will work for us, then establishing a set of steps to achieve the results. For example, we will probably consider things like how to mesh science with math. How could graphing be included in both areas that makes sense and that reinforces for the kids some basic principles from both disciplines. Then the next step would be to include social studies and see what in that curriculum could mesh with what is being done. It won't be easy, but we can do it.

Navigating

Frequently, change efforts take place over time on many levels. How has the progression in teaming at Crystal evolved over time in the specific context of the school?

This administrator has anticipated a possible problem area in the next level of teaming reform. What do you think of his decision to slow down? What else could be done?

Supporting the Crew

One of the things we are doing to facilitate this process is making a commitment of various resources and looking at some long range kinds of things we can do that will make a difference. We have several mentor teachers here who have already committed to provide in-servicing as may be deemed necessary. They are going to begin this process by doing some things with staff on collaboration and selection processes.

Supporting the Crew

Not Alone

On an equally important plane, we are starting to take some very serious looks at credentialing, not only with our present staff, but with new staff members who are hired. We have been working closely with one of the professors from Cal State who brought the value of this to our attention. With any new staff hired, and this does happen regularly at our school since we are growing, we are going to be looking at teachers with an elementary training and credential, particularly those with training in more than one content area. With our current staff, we are also looking at credentials and identifying teachers with these same characteristics. Their whole focus, speaking collectively of course, should be more in tune with what we want to achieve with teaming. Using these staff members, and others as well, who exhibit a great deal of flexibility and knowledge with more than one subject area in key roles these next six months should pay off.

How does this principal link staffing considerations with his middle school vision? What difference do staff background and training make in middle school reform? Can you imagine an "ideal" middle school staff?

Not Alone

Supporting the Crew

Ports of Call

We have also recently joined CLMS (California League of Middle Schools). I am very excited about this move for us, because of the support that they can provide, but also because they can provide us with a lot of resources and networking. I think it's really important that my staff members work with staff members from other schools who are involved in similar reform efforts. It will also give us an opportunity to see the other things that schools are doing and help us to make decisions about the next steps we need to take. Change at Crystal is an ongoing process. I don't think we'll ever be "really done."

VARIATIONS ON THE THEMES

Getting Launched

The impetus for embarking upon middle grades reform can originate from many sources. In some instances, the decision to move in this direction is made at the district level; this occurs for a variety of reasons, which may include matters of expediency as well as philosophy. In other cases, the work of professional organizations and associations—newsletters, conferences, special reports, etc.—influences members (administrators and/or teachers) who take the ideas back to their sites. In still other cases, an individual administrator or teacher may wish to implement a personal vision or philosophy.

Wherever the idea of change originates, authentic middle school reform does not occur by decree or by the conferring of a name. We have highlighted the idea that a middle school cannot be equated with a configuration of grades or the adoption of a certain curriculum, a particular teaching strategy, or a policy about how students are grouped. We have suggested that implementing middle school reform is a process that can be likened to that of embarking on a nautical journey. A key ingredient to launching a school on that journey is the leadership at the school site. Without the captain's commitment to the process and willingness to give the go-ahead, the voyage is unlikely to succeed.

In keeping with our focus on middle grades reform as a process, we would like to suggest in this section that providing successful leadership for that process requires the administrator to combine his or her specific school leadership skills with a mind set that recognizes the particular challenges of spearheading the process. This means that the administrator must understand both what it means to be a middle school and what is involved in facilitating educational change. While gaining such understanding is a process in itself, there are several ideas or points of view that can help the captain at the outset of the journey.

To begin with, the captain needs to realize and communicate to others that becoming a middle school in spirit as well as in name means engaging in an ongoing, organic enterprise; the process of implementing change requires time, some of which may be uncomfortable or even painful. Commitment to the journey necessitates some risk taking; neither the course nor the final destination of the journey can be specified with certainty in advance; and there will be both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes at all stages.

Being aware of these elements allows the administrator to take into account specific characteristics of the school context in determining the best way to get launched. One very important factor is the readiness level of staff. This includes their familiarity with the middle school concept, their openness to change, and their concerns about embarking on the journey. In thinking about the staff's level of concern, the administrator needs to include characteristics of the group as well as of individuals. For example, what is the history of the staff as a working group; what norms exist among them; what is the group morale; how do they see themselves as professionals? All of these factors contribute to the professional climate that can support or impede the journey.

The existing school structure and staffing are factors that enter into staff readiness. Both the current configuration of grades and the background and experience of staff contribute to how middle school reform will be viewed. For example, the middle school focus on considering the needs of the whole child is more congruent with the conventional structure of elementary grade education.

Staff experience and stability also enter the picture. On the one hand, an experienced, stable staff may be hard to move into the process of change; on the other hand, such a staff may have developed professional norms and working relationships that support innovation. The successful captain is one who incorporates such factors into his or her leadership strategies.

In addition to assessing contextual factors within and outside the school, the administrator also needs to consider his or her own preferred leadership style and activities and how to fit those to the task at hand. For example, administrators describe ways of getting launched as indirect as "planting a seed" and letting it take hold gradually over several years' time and as direct as coming on board as a new captain with a district mandate and a personal commitment to implementing middle school reform. Somewhere between these two extremes, other administrators describe collaborative exploration of the possibilities of middle school reform with some or all of their staff members that led to an experimental or pilot effort.

To return to a recurring theme, there is no single best way of getting the journey launched. In some instances, the entire school engages in the process; in others, the process begins with a subgroup of the faculty. In all instances, the administrator is pivotal in the initial launch; the commitment and support from the administrator to the reform effort, taking into account the time involved, the risks involved, the contextual factors involved, etc., makes a critical difference in every phase of the change process which follows.

The following cases, as described by successful administrators, portray both their commitment to the middle school concept and their consideration of various factors affecting readiness. The case of **Burroughs Middle School** exemplifies the critical role of the administrator and illustrates the administrator's mind set as the journey into change is launched. The principal of this school had experienced some fundamental frustrations with education for middle grade students and was attempting to determine some productive solutions. The model provided by *The Essential Middle School* struck a cord of responsiveness from him that essentially launched his school into the making of many changes. But it was the heartfelt commitment on his part *to provide an educational environment in the best interests of the students* that translated, like that of the ship captain's, into the willingness

to expend the time, the effort, and the energy needed to get the job done. And it was this commitment that fueled his support for the crew members as they worked in tandem with him to reach their destination. At **Garden Intermediate School**, the need for productive solutions was felt at the outset by teachers as well as administrators. This created the conditions for teachers and the assistant principal to take an early leadership role, with support from the principal. We see here, as in other cases throughout the book, that other staff along with the principal are often key catalysts for change. At **Taft Junior High School**, a series of steps were taken by the principal to insure that a clear understanding of the concepts from *Caught in the Middle* occurred prior to discussions about change. The school staff then determined, together, to move forward and implement change.

As you read the three cases, pay particular attention to the school contexts being described. What are the conditions that exist in each school? Was there an event that precipitated recognizing the need and making the commitment to change? How did each administrator think about that event? What was it that led each to take the idea of change seriously?

I had been an assistant principal in a large high school prior to coming to the middle school as principal. At the high school, we had lots of students who were problems in one way or another. But we also had lots of alternatives for them to assist with the transition into adulthood. We had various after-school programs, we had continuation schools, we had adult school programs, we had ROP programs, and we had lots of others. If necessary, we could even exclude students from school and they could go out and get a job.

When I came to the middle school, I found the traditional junior high model in place, but the terrible frustration for me was that there were no alternatives for the students "at risk." I had no place to put these students to meet their needs when what we were doing was not proving successful. This was very frustrating for me and bothered me to the point that I decided I needed to do something. I had no idea what, though. What do you do with students at this age that will not turn them off to the educational process entirely? What options could there possibly be? I realized that whatever solutions existed had to exist within the school framework I had.

I started by analyzing our statistical data: our CTBS scores, our Proficiency scores (we didn't have CAP scores then), etc. I also looked at our attendance rates, our suspension rates, and our expulsion rates. I tried to answer questions such as, what are our major problems, what are the reasons for suspension, and what might be the causes?

I found that our male population was particularly aggressive. I found there was a lot of racial tension in general, and I found continual occurrences of fighting and defiance of authority.

I then started to look at our school structure for patterns that might give me a clue how best to approach curtailing some of the above. I looked at how students went from class to class; I looked at how much time they had to get there; I looked at critical areas where fights were taking place; I looked at just about everything I could find. One of the first things that I started seeing was that smaller groups of students, with shorter distances to travel within smaller timeframes, worked better than larger groups going long distances with lots of time to do it in.

I also noticed that most teachers had little or no collegial contacts with one another. Our staff meetings were gripe sessions, pure and simple. Each meeting ended up being a series of gripes about all the things that were wrong with no attempts made at problem solving.

It was at about this time in my thrashing about in frustration that the Superintendent gave me the book *The Essential Middle School*, by John Wiles and Joseph Bondi, and said to me, "Let's explore the direction in which we want to go."

I read the book and, needless to say, it piqued my interest! It was the very model that I had been looking for. It answered a lot of the questions about what to do that I had been looking for. The Director of Secondary Instruction and I then went to a workshop through NASCD and spent an entire week with Wiles and Bondi. We came back and looked at what our school was already doing that fit into the middle school concept. We weren't doing much. We decided we needed to visit several schools to see what they were doing; we did. This helped a lot, and it made it very apparent that we needed to get started. It was at this point that I started identifying teacher leaders, setting up teams of teachers, and sending those teams out to look at the various programs in other schools and make suggestions about what we could do here at Burroughs Middle School. A year later, *Caught in the Middle* came out and validated for us everything we had begun.

How did this administrator's background and experience interact with school conditions to "pave the way" for middle school reform?

What kinds of activities does this principal seem to prefer as he launches reform in the school? How would you characterize his leadership style?

TEACHER DISSATISFACTION:

Garden Intermediate

For some time, the teachers at Garden Intermediate had been dissatisfied with their ability to reach their urban seventh and eighth graders. The teaching strategies that the teachers relied upon did not seem to be doing the job. And things were, if anything, getting worse, not better.

Five years ago, the district decided, due to space requirements, to send sixth grade students to the school and move ninth grade students to the high school. Sixth graders came the following fall. The structure of the school reflected a mini-high school with a departmental organization. The sixth graders' reaction to this structure made clear to some of the staff the need for a dramatic change in the manner in which the school was organized.

While this could have been "one more thing," a core group of teachers and administrators decided to take a serious look at middle school ideas and philosophy. Perhaps there was something that would help them to a better job with all their youngsters. The assistant principal and several teachers formed a committee to look at middle school literature. They would address the immediate issue of the sixth graders, but look even harder at the middle school approach to organization of the school and delivery of the instructional program.

While the principal provided general support, the core group began to implement some changes. They re-organized into disciplinary teams and moved most of the staff to new room locations to enable teams to be located in physical proximity to each other. They introduced team teaching and more active learning strategies. They planned some transitional activities for sixth graders and reward systems for all students. But above all, they came to appreciate the middle school philosophy of focus on the needs of the students. The group continues to refine and develop programs. And now they are called upon to assist other schools as they get underway.

Teacher dissatisfaction created a readiness in this school. Why do you suppose this happened? How did it get channeled effectively?

Notice that the principal never plays the major actor role in this story. Instead, the assistant principal and teachers form the core change group. Who might play this role in your school?

Moving sixth graders into a building often serves as a catalytic event for middle school reform. But other events could do the same thing, if the opportunity were taken. Whatkinds of external events could serve as an opportunity for reevaluation at your site?

A SCHOOL-WIDE PROCESS:

Taft Junior High School

In the fall of the 1987-88 school year, the principal and vice principal met to discuss the middle school concept. The principal's goal for the year was to explore the CORE concept and have a plan for its implementation for the 1988-89 school year. This goal was motivated by the fact that he saw a need for the middle school-aged student to have a smoother academic and social transition from elementary to junior high.

The vice principal followed up by reading available middle school information. In addition, she attended county office meetings and secured a copy of the document entitled *Caught in the Middle*.

The vice principal and a group of teachers attended a middle school county conference. The committee reported to the entire junior high school staff. The discussion and awareness continued throughout the beginning of the school year. Each teacher was given a copy of *Caught in the Middle*.

The next step involved junior high school team visits to area schools that had implemented parts of the middle school concept. Teams went on school site visits with prepared questions that were generated by the entire junior high school staff. Teams reported back to the entire junior high school staff.

Almost fifty percent of the junior high school teachers attended a Joe Bondi workshop toward the end of the school year. They all "bought into" the team approach.

At the end of the school year, board presentations were made. A teaching team presented on adolescent development and the need to address this concept in our junior high school program. Another teacher addressed the concept of integration of subject matter and how it is especially meaningful to the junior high school age student; that is, developmentally they are ready to conceptualize the interrelatedness of literature and social studies. Our vice principal presented a three to five year plan which would bring us in step with *Caught in the Middle*.

Why do you think things went so smoothly? What conditions do you think were already in place? Which activities do you think were important?

Establishing A Destination

It is a commonplace that the leader of the school, like the captain of the ship, must know where the ship is headed. "If you don't know where you are going, you'll never get there."

Recent research on school leadership has underscored the importance of vision. For instance, Dwyer and his colleagues studied in depth twelve principals with reputations for excellence. Each of these individuals had an overarching sense of goals for the school, and then used a wide variety of techniques to work toward those goals. Some of their actions were dramatic, creating symbols and calling public attention to the goals. But they also made use of the everyday structures and routines of the school. They deliberately directed their myriad daily actions and communications toward their goals (Dwyer *et al*, 1985). They had a sense of purpose.

Vince Lombardi, the famous football coach, reportedly made the same point. When asked what made a great coach, he replied that "you have to know what you're looking for." He said that all coaches did basically the same things--they held drills, diagrammed plays, gave pep talks. The great coaches did these things better because they knew better how they wanted the team to function, how it would look when things were going right.

But it is not enough for the principal to have this vision. The vision must be shared by the rest of the school staff. A new emphasis in the theory and research on effective school (and business) organizations is the concept of "culture." Culture is "an all encompassing tapestry of meaning. . . 'the way we do things around here'" (Deal, 1988). Culture is expressed through such things as shared values, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, stories, and cultural networking. And it is vitally important to the effective functioning of the organization:

> Where cultures are cohesive, people contribute their efforts toward a common destiny, rallying around shared values that give meaning to work—and to their lives. When cultures are fragmented, people 'do their jobs,' worry about salaries, and spend their time struggling for power. . . What a school 'stands for' needs to be shared. (Deal, 1988, pp. 9, 13)

Middle school reform fits perfectly into this picture. The very nature of middle school reform centers on philosophy, a sense of purpose in meeting the needs of middle grades youngsters. The specific features of the school organization and program follow from, and are given meaning by, this underlying purpose.

Each principal, each school staff, must create its own vision, its own sense of the destination toward which all are willing to travel. In many ways, the process of working together to define the vision is as important as the actual wording of the vision that emerges. And, as we look across several cases, we see some common actions that principals and staff engage in as they work to develop their vision: People must explore ideas, talk to each other, investigate alternatives, see things in action, and hammer out their own local vision before it can be real and meaningful for them.

The following cases illustrate how four schools determined their destinations, each in a different and individual way. In the illustration of **Manzanita Middle School**, a principal's strongly held beliefs lead to their shared school vision. In **Alexander Middle School**, a district initiative takes root and flourishes. In **Forest District**, three teachers from different junior highs come together and create a common philosophy statement. In **Jackson Intermediate School**, a principal explores various middle school values with his staff, which leads to a mission statement. As you read and compare these cases, consider the different ways in which district and school-level processes interact. Look, as well, for the ways and sequences in which people use such activities as reading key documents, holding staff discussions, visiting other schools, attending conferences, or writing a mission statement. How do they interact with the school board?

SHARED VISIONS:

Manzanita Middle School

A solitary figure stood at the top of a rise on Manzanita Middle School's campus, observing PE students involved in volleyball exercises. Erika Holden, the principal of the school, was interested in the interactions and social adjustment of two students who had recently entered the school. Her observation came about as a result of two strongly held beliefs:

- All middle school students should be genuinely cared for and should know they are cared for.
- All middle school students should be successful and accepted.

As Ms. Holden explained, "Everything that happens at this school flows out of these two beliefs." Her vision for the school is one where students feel good about themselves and where they have maximum opportunity for learning. "You really can't have successful students, students who value and take an interest in learning, if they don't have a strong sense of self esteem and an experience of acceptance from others." As the principal left the hillside, she smiled with satisfaction. The two students appeared to be involved with other students and participating.

Ms. Holden has been in the district for eighteen years and has seen the change from a two-school district to the present eight, including two middle schools. This dramatic growth was an important factor in creating a vision that "worked" for Manzanita. "Fit is important," Ms. Holden stated, "The vision has to make sense for your school."

Ms. Holden had spent several years developing her own vision of middle schools. Since 1983 she had attended numerous workshops and conferences where the idea of "middle schools" was beginning to take shape. She had spoken with various conference leaders and other administrators around the country about what these ideas meant organizationally and philosophically. She had read numerous research articles and materials. She had become a member of the National Middle School Association. She felt she knew what was important in middle school reform. She felt she had all the pieces to the puzzle.

Participating in the ATC (Administrator Training Center) training module on vision helped her take the next step. "Three years ago, I had a lot of ideas about what worked in middle schools, but they were pieces to an incomplete puzzle. Those pieces came together for me after the ATC module." What she realized was that the pieces were all important components but needed to be unified. It was at this point Ms. Holden verbalized her two major beliefs and used them as the unifying force for the reforms which have followed. "Whatever we do, we do not lose sight of our two basic beliefs

about children," says Ms. Holden. "It is because of these beliefs that we are here in the first place."

As she became clearer about her own vision, Ms. Holden recognized the importance of a second ATC teaching—that vision needs to be shared with others—otherwise, one might be a leader with no followers.

Sharing the vision—with staff, Board and district—became an ongoing process. As she explained, "It's so easy to get on a roll, doing your own thing, and forget what the others are doing." With this recognition, Ms. Holden began a different approach, one of constant communication with those around her. "What hits eventually, is that you have all this information, but no one else does. So I started pulling teachers in and talking with them, and sharing the information with them." She also realized that she needed to start doing things at staff meetings that shared this information. "It became obvious that it needed to get talked about, not just here and there, but openly at staff meetings, of what it was that I expected a middle school to be."

Using information from the National Middle School Association's publications, Ms. Holden began duplicating articles and giving them to the staff, trying to increase awareness of what makes middle schools unique. "We didn't read anything outside of these booklets because we didn't want a difference of opinion." With a common base of information, "we started a jig-sawing of historical information on middle schools so the staff was sharing what the differences were." Next, she took the characteristics of middle school students from *This We Believe*, and did similar activities with teachers at staff meetings. "This was how I started with sharing the vision. You can't do anything if you're the only one with the information. `Wait a minute! I know this stuff, but they don't know this stuff!'"

Ms. Holden included taking Board members, as well as staff members, to various meetings and conferences that pertained to middle school/student characteristics. "This way there was support for changes they were about to be seeing. They understood why we were making some of the changes we were making." Changes included going to a seven-period day, cooperative learning in classrooms, dances after school, intramurals, using higher order thinking skills, etc. "Basically, one of the things that both staff and board members needed to see was why we were backing away from high school types of activities."

Once there was a common base of understanding among staff members about the characteristics of middle schools and middle school students, Ms. Holden started staff discussions and jig-saw group discussions about what these characteristics meant in terms of classroom interaction and teaching. "You can understand that a child's bones are growing, but what does that mean in the classroom? What does that mean in terms of what you are teaching? What does that mean in terms of how you are teaching? For

example, if I want to develop students' social skills, then I should be doing lots of cooperative learning."

Ms. Holden spends a great deal of time with the staff on various options for presenting information to students, including inquiry methods, concept formation, interactive learning, and cross-curricular materials. "We needed to look at how to get the information across to students so that it becomes more than just a lecture. What else can you do?" Looking at various teaching strategies, she stressed planning as critical in any teaching endeavor. "There needs to be planning in teaching, not just being the giver of information and expecting students to respond to that information."

Above all else, Ms. Holden has prepared her staff for change. "Change is constant in middle schools, and change occurs regularly at Manzanita." She feels that having a staff that is willing to try new things, to be creative, to approach information in a different manner, makes the difference in achievement of a vision. "Because we are child-centered, rather than content-centered, we are always looking at what we're doing with the kids we are working with and at how to reach them more effectively. We're changing all the time."

In an atmosphere of change and willingness to make changes to reach kids more effectively, many programs have been undertaken at Manzanita. Sometimes, these programs haven't proven to be productive or to achieve what they were intended for. When that has happened, the staff has simply thrown them out. "We want to make sure that what we do fits. Our staff and students are different from others. For example, we do advisement three days a week and HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) two. Some schools don't do HOTS at all, or do advisement five times a week. What we do has to fit here."

Ms. Holden relies on state, district, and school mission statements/goals to keep Manzanita headed in the right direction. "You've got to have some direction and you've got to have it written down so that you can always refer to it if you need to. Otherwise, you talk about this 'grey' thing out there instead of talking about 'This is what we've said we believe in.'"

Ms. Holden sees the principal's role as "making a difference" in the process of change. As she says, "Having a vision is not enough. You have to be a cheerleader and be out there all the time." And she is. She visits classrooms frequently, she is out in the quad area during breaks and lunchtime, and she teaches one of the advisory classes. Teachers indicate that the latter makes a big difference for them. As one stated, "The principal is actively involved. She <u>does</u> it as well as dictates it." Another indicated that the principal's involvement "makes it possible for us to adjust; because she is doing it we can talk to her about what works and what doesn't. She understands."

But more than anything else, there is a sense of working together, working for similar goals at Manzanita. The principal has clearly delineated her expectations, couched those expectations in two easily understood statements, created school goals that reflect those statements and aligned them with district and state goals. Ms. Holden has created an environment where staff talk with one another regularly about student learning and what it means in the classroom. Modeling is provided, and as teachers become familiar with a new skill they begin to use it. With increased sophistication with various skills, they see how much more is possible and are eager to try new things. Teachers communicate a "you can do this" atmosphere to the students. And the teachers demonstrate a similar approach. As a teacher commented to the principal, "Around our school it's always 'We can do that,' then afterwards we go 'How are we going to do that?'" Teachers then look at new ideas in a framework of making them possible. "We seem to be able to make a commitment to do 'it,' whatever 'it' may be. If it's making the students successful, or improving curriculum, we do it." As Ms. Holden states, "I can honestly say that staff members on this campus give more. When the district offers something, 95% of my staff will be there." As one teacher summarized, "There is a little bit of magic here. The students have been rewarded and so have the teachers. We all feel a sense of success and accomplishment."

Notice the pivotal position of the principal in the development of vision in this school. Where does the vision come from? How does it change over time? How does it get shared with the staff? How does it influence what gets done in the school?

This principal has a personal vision that she meshes with district and state mandates. What does each of these "layers" contribute to overall school vision?

A DISTRICT INITIATIVE:

Alexander Middle School

Due to increased population and overcrowding of the elementary schools, the Midlands Unified School District School Board approved the transfer of sixth-grade classes from elementary school to the middle school level. The transfer planning process began in January of 1986. The middle school principals, parent/teacher representatives, and district personnel formed a committee whose responsibility it was to make this transfer of students as smooth as possible. Part of the recommendations of this committee included the housing of the sixth graders together at one end of the campus, and further separating the sixth graders by arranging a separate lunch period. The committee felt that a gradual transition of the sixth grade into the main stream of campus life would be most beneficial for these students. Within the second semester of the 1985-86 school year, the planning process was completed. Sixth graders were on both middle school campuses by the fall of 1986.

During this district planning, a strong commitment was made at both the district and school site levels to learn more about middle schools. As a result, a Middle School Task Force was formed, composed of the superintendent, principals from both middle schools, teachers, parents, and school board members. The district made a further financial commitment by sending representatives from the Task Force, area coordinators (department chairpersons), and administrative staff from both middle schools to the California League of Middle Schools Conference held in April of 1986. Those attending were surprised and pleased to learn that Alexander Middle School had already accomplished a variety of the recommendations found in a new report *Caught in the Middle* distributed at the conference. For example, a study skills curriculum had been designed and integrated into the social studies classes at all grade levels. At-risk students had been identified and an after school study hall, staffed by teachers, had been created for those students. Late busing was provided after school which enabled students to participate in new extra curricular activities and attend the after school study hall.

The area coordinators and administrative staff who attended the conference were provided the opportunity to share their new insights and ideas at staff meetings. At Alexander, enthusiasm was high! To support the new ideas and enthusiasm gained from the conference, the Principal, Patricia Jones, purchased the *Caught in the Middle* report for each member of her staff. Each staff member was asked to read it. The research from *Caught in the Middle* was then reviewed at staff meetings along with the characteristics of middle school students. As a group, the staff decided on several key areas at Alexander in which to implement the report.

The principal and staff agreed that more research and planning were necessary before they could take action in these key areas. Therefore, the principal asked for volunteers to form committees to address the following areas: school schedule, intramurals, advisor/advisee program, study skills, clubs, activities, study hall (including tutoring), and increasing parent involvement/public relations.

The principal worked with the area coordinators and committee chairpersons to provide communication to the entire staff regarding the committees' progress. The committees wrote recommendations in each area. They presented their findings to the staff during a minimum day of released time. The staff was given the opportunity to discuss, question, and vote on each proposal. The decision was made to accept the recommendations of each committee. Although some staff members were not completely convinced that change was needed, they willingly went along with the ideas generated and accepted by the staff.

The following year, a mission statement was created and goal statements to support the mission statement were written by the entire staff. It was also decided to totally integrate the sixth grade classes into the total school program, as it was felt that the students and teachers were too isolated. The committee recommendations, mission statement, goals, and budget requirements needed to implement new programs were submitted to the superintendent and approved.

This school made some decisions that went beyond those of the district task force. What factors contributed to this happening?

Alexander Middle School developed its mission statement after a sequence of committee activities. Was this appropriate timing? Why?

CREATING A PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:

Forest District

Quite early in the process of the district's "going over" to a middle school philosophy, our district coordinator organized a team of three interested teachers (one from each junior high). We spent an interesting morning discussing the prospect of achieving middle schoolness--the excitement, the challenge, the necessity, the rationale for such a change.

The three of us (the teachers) then kicked off our shoes, literally, and dug into the project of forging a philosophical statement. This statement was to be the first concrete step toward becoming middle schools.

We soon had a large conference room littered with resources, including *Caught in the Middle*, Al Arth quotes, books, shoes, coffee cups, National Middle School Association philosophies, California League of Middle School pamphlets, large sheets of paper filled with our brainstorms, and a real excitement and sense of cooperation. We were all "of a mind" when it came to pinning down the essence of "middle-school-ness."

The result of our six hours of work was a simple statement encompassing five major elements that we felt were essential in being a middle school.

In retrospect, it was one of the most exciting and productive moments in my educational career. And the real reward came a few months later when the Board of Education approved our "Statement of Philosophy" as district policy and changed all three junior highs to middle schools.

Of course, that only heralded the beginning of a lot more hard work and challenge, but a start was made.

Unlike the previous district, this district began with a philosophy statement. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy?

CREATING SCHOOL VALUES:

Jackson Intermediate School

During my first year on the ACSA Middle Administration Committee, I began to come across information regarding middle schools. At about the same time, *Caught in the Middle* was distributed to the administrators in our district by the superintendent's office. I felt that I wanted to explore these middle school concepts to see how Jackson could benefit from them. I was interested in what I found and decided to get my staff involved.

Throughout the school year, I gave portions of *Caught in the Middle* to various staff members for reading and discussion. The California League of Middle Schools had a conference during this time period, so I got some faculty members to volunteer to participate; I went with them. At a subsequent staff meeting, the ideas from the conference were shared with the rest of the staff. One of the staff members suggested that we visit some other schools to see what they were doing. We all thought it was a great idea!

Contact was made with nearby middle schools, and schedules were established for visitation by staff members. We wanted every staff member to visit one or more schools and this proved to be of great value. As staff members went out to visit, some in teams, some independently, I encouraged them to find opportunities to talk to team members, lead teachers and principals. Following the visitations, staff meetings were held to allow each staff member to share his/her views. Some concerns were expressed by staff members, focused around "how to do" various tasks, including heterogenous grouping, teaming, setting up a student responsibility center, etc.

I developed a proposal for the staff to consider based on what I had read and observed. It was an excellent beginning place. The teachers gave me a lot of input and suggestions, and we modified the proposal together. After additional modifications, the plan was agreed upon by all staff members but one. We went before the school board for approval and received it.

From this initial work that we did, we then developed a mission statement that all teachers bought into. The mission statement helped us to express the ideas that we had gotten from *Caught in the Middle*. It helped us make the ideas our own.

Development of this school's mission, or destination, occurred in a very different way than any of the three preceding cases. What are the differences in development of each? What seems to account for these differences? As a group, do the cases represent any principles about middle school vision?

Just as the captain of the vessel cannot singlehandedly perform all of the tasks necessary to reach the destination, the school leader depends on staff to carry out the day-to-day activities that comprise the school program. Overseeing those activities, monitoring progress, providing resources, encouraging improvement, and the myriad other roles that the administrator performs, require a wide array of leadership skills; the way in which these are carried out depends on characteristics of the leader him/herself as well as contextual factors specific to the school and the district. When the school is engaged in the process of change or reform implementation, the leadership task becomes more complex; any change effort represents a departure from the status quo, which is bound to raise concerns on the part of staff. The savvy captain knows that a dissatisfied or demoralized crew will not pull together to help the vessel reach its destination. Thus, the ways in which the staff are involved in all phases of middle school reform can be critical factors in the success of the effort.

In the previous section, we discussed the importance of reaching a shared school vision and illustrated some of the strategies that leaders use to inform and support their staffs in achieving this. In this section we consider some of the "human factors" that enter into leadership for change or reform; discussions and illustrations of strategies that have been used successfully by school leaders provide suggestions for the reader, but demonstrate once again that there is no "one right way" to involve staff in the change effort.

As we have pointed out before, contextual factors play a most important role in setting the framework of choice for the administrator. With respect to staff, some of the most immediate and obvious factors that require consideration include both the characteristics of individuals themselves as well as characteristics of their working relationships and history together. Consider, for example, staff members' professional experience, background, and training. Both elementary and secon-

professional experience, background, and training. Both elementary and secondary experiences offer important, but likely different, contributions to middle grades; and each is also likely to raise different kinds of concerns about middle school reform. Similarly, the history of a staff as a group, the kinds of shared beliefs held by the group about schools, students, norms of professional behavior, instructional strategies, shared responsibilities, and so forth are all part of the contextual factors that the leader takes into account.

The narratives that our middle grades administrators provided about their experiences in working with their staffs fall into three clusters or themes. At the heart of the matter, important for any whole-school reform effort, is the issue of *buy-in*. Given a staff comprised of individuals who experience a high level of autonomy in their work, how does a leader get the group all moving in the same direction toward a shared destination? A second theme that emerges in the accounts is the issue of *cultivating leadership among staff members*. How does the leader develop lieutenants to support the work of the crew? Finally, a third idea that administrators discuss in their narratives is the issue of *keeping the staff moving and on target*. In the day-to-day work of running the ship, how does the captain help the staff keep in mind their ultimate destination and maintain their morale when the going gets rough or the destination seems too far?

In the pages that follow, each of these themes is discussed in turn. Illustrations from administrators' narratives offer concrete ideas but also demonstrate the importance of targeting strategies to the specific context of the school.

Achieving Buy-In

The challenge of achieving staff buy-in to reform is related to the discrepancy between the current state of affairs and the desired outcome. In the language of our metaphor, the crew's perception of how different the new voyage looks in comparison to what they signed up for will influence how they regard the proposed change. For example, if changing directions requires skills that the staff does not feel pre-

pared to demonstrate, reluctance is likely to be high. Similarly, if the new destination is perceived as unattainable or something that's been attempted unsuccessfully before, staff buy-in will be absent. On the other hand, a crew that is disenchanted or disappointed with the current voyage may welcome an opportunity to do something different. How, specifically, does a leader work to move the staff to agreement about the desirability of reform? The administrators who have written about successes in this area are consistently aware of the need to anticipate staff response and to plan a strategy that is appropriate for what they expect and consistent with the administrator's own preferred leadership style. Sometimes they moved slowly, allowing time for staff to get accustomed to new ideas; other times they acted more assertively. Sometimes they felt that they had anticipated accurately; other times they were surprised. Consider both their concrete actions and the consequences as you read the three cases which follow: **Planting a Seed**; **Reflections on Losing Staff**; and **A Concerted Effort to Change Math Groups**. What were each administrator's reasons for acting as he or she did?

PLANTING A SEED: Springdale Middle School

In our particular case, the process used to provide leadership for needed change was to plant a seed and let the staff develop the idea collegially. Interdisciplinary teams were my goal, but the approach was completely new to the staff. I asked the teachers to think about working with another person and to consider the possible problems and constraints, as well as the possible successes.

Three years ago I planted this seed. To support it, we used inservice days and released time to visit existing models. Following the visitations, total staff met to discuss what they had seen. "Buy-in" was varied and represented the two extremes of "I would like to try to implement such a program immediately" and "I don't want to discuss it further."

Those interested in implementing some form of teaming developed a plan that incorporated both site and staff constraints. Plan developers asked staff members with an open mind to join them in teaming; often these were friends willing to volunteer because they knew they could work with a particular person or persons. Each plan provided for team support services, such as time for team meetings; plans also developed standard discipline practices and specified what the nature of the teaming would be and what responsibilities each person would assume.

Looking back, I can now say that the staff has developed and implemented a model that exceeds my original expectations. The staff continues to surprise me with new facets of the model and sophisticated interaction in working with each other and with students.

Notice that the principal gave the teachers a lot of leeway to make their own plans for teams. Do you think this was a good idea?

How did he provide guidance to what they were doing?

REFLECTIONS ON LOSING STAFF:

Fulton Junior High School

The Fulton Junior High School staff had a history of developing and implementing outstanding programs. In many cases, staff originated ideas and "sold" them to team members. In these cases I viewed my principalship as a facilitating position providing support and resources for the new/revised program.

I was aware that a nucleus of people did not care what new programs were discussed, developed, and implemented as long as they were not involved. This group became more difficult as the staff discussed middle school reform in the areas of interdisciplinary teams, flexible scheduling, and advisory periods. It was interesting that in discussions the staff agreed these were beneficial changes, worthy of implementation; however much they might agree in principle, the "no-change" people adhered to their "not by me" position.

Despite these differences among staff, we continued working on reform. This discussion and planning made several staff so uncomfortable that they asked for a change in assignment; this self-selection has allowed me to hire new teachers whose philosophy and skills support reform.

One of the lessons we have learned from this experience is that we pushed for consensus too quickly. In retrospect, we believe that we needed to gather more information in small groups where people feel more comfortable and express opinions more openly rather than to hold all discussions with the total staff. A strategy that might have avoided staff leaving the school would have been to plant ideas and help them grow by providing literature related to a specific reform, followed by the opportunity to discuss the ideas in small groups, with long-range planning undertaken as soon as a majority of staff could agree to consider the plan once it is developed.

Implementation seems slower with this method; however, it helps avoid a head-on clash between staff members that not only delays the proposed new program but may interfere with programs already in place.

What similarities do you see between this case and the previous one? Do you suppose the principal who did "plant a seed" might also lose staff? Some principals think that it is great to have teachers leave voluntarily so that they can recruit teachers who fit in better with the school philosophy. This principal points out some problems with such an approach. What do you think?

A CONCERTED EFFORT TO CHANGE MATH GROUPS:

Jefferson Middle School

Complaints and pressures had bedeviled our math department for four years. In a nutshell, the problem could be summarized as too many course offerings. Seventh and eighth graders each had seven options, while sixth graders had two. Too many singletons and doubletons made for a master scheduling nightmare. Some "old timers" in the department were resistant to any kind of change. Some teachers complained of multiple preparations. Was there really a difference between courses offered at each grade level?

The department chair and I agreed to confront the problem. Our goal was to bring about changes in the math department which would reduce teacher preps, lessen the number of course offerings available, meet parent needs for clarity, and challenge students. We realized that confusion and resistance would likely occur if we broached the topic in an open meeting without warning. Therefore, we decided on an alternative route.

In a series of meetings, the two of us brainstormed a whole system of course offerings that would be open to any student on the criteria of math ability. Our next step was to share this concept with other members of the math department in one-to-one conversations. In each discussion, we asked the teacher to suggest improvements. After talking with seven of nine department members, the chair and I further developed what was now becoming a "proposal."

After similar meetings with the school counselor, a number of influential parents, and a co-administrator, we published "cross-graded math" as an agenda item for a December math department meeting. Because we had done our homework well, very little resistance was encountered; most math teachers had bought into the proposal because they had been involved in the process and had had time to reflect on the new system's impact on them.

January, February, and March department meetings were used to further define the new system, develop a placement test, plan for articulation with feeder school teachers and parents, and to gather data for the individual responsible for developing the school's master schedule. One and a half years later, we can report that teachers are happy, master scheduler is happy, students are challenged and co-exist in cross-graded sections without untoward social incidents, parents appear pleased, and the department chair and I believe that the cross-graded course offerings have made math content delivery at the school more effective.

The kind of change being made here is different from the previous examples. Do you think that made any difference in selection of a strategy?

Notice all of the role groups they contacted as they "did their homework" before putting the item on a meeting agenda.

Cultivating Staff Leadership

The examples just cited illustrate a variety of ways in which administrators approach the task of achieving staff buy-in for reform. Running through these descriptions are examples of leadership roles played by staff members other than the principal. Key staff, such as department chairs or champions of ideas, can play important roles in implementing and supporting reform efforts. Both formal and informal leaders in the school are resources that administrators nourish and cultivate to support change. Strategies that expand the capacity of individual teachers to develop and use their skills and expertise beyond the self-contained classroom can be powerful tools for building staff ownership of reform. Delegating responsibility for specific tasks (for example, by putting teachers in charge of committees or teams), can increase commitment when responsibility includes real decision making.

The following four cases describe ways in which various forms of teacher teaming, collaboration and leadership developed and grew in the sites. In keeping with the topic, the last of these cases is written by a teacher. Think about not only what specific strategies were used in each site but also what beliefs and personal characteristics were demonstrated as you read the following narratives: **Teachers Stretch Themselves Through Teaming; The Collective Wisdom of Teachers in Teams; Reorganizing and Supporting Teams;** and **Dreams to Reality: Teacher Empowerment**. How do these administrators identify teacher leaders? What do they do to develop them? How do the teachers respond?

TEACHERS STRETCH THEMSELVES THROUGH TEAMING:

Eastside Middle School

One of my teachers has been teaching for twenty-eight years. He didn't expect any major changes to occur in the way he was teaching school and was planning retirement within the next few years. At the beginning of the 88-89 school year, however, my staff became fully teamed, combining language arts, social studies, math, and science teachers as the nucleus of each team. I approached this teacher about becoming one of the team leaders. I did so because teachers looked up to him and respected him. He was, however, a mediocre teacher in the classroom, and was tired.

This teacher, as team leader, has literally blossomed, and become re-excited about teaching. He is an excellent leader, and has a well-functioning team. I have been very pleased with the results of my choice.

I first determined to begin teaming after several teachers visited some schools that were already teaming. I had seen some teaming done in another school, and was impressed. I met with the group of teachers, and encouraged them to come up with a proposal for the staff. They did, and were met with some enthusiasm and some reluctance. One teacher was adamantly opposed to the concept and did her best to prevent implementation by lobbying with our board. She is now one of our staunchest supporters and, in fact, has commented, "I'm glad this man made me do this. There is so much support working this way." Sometimes you have to go ahead, even when there is opposition. You can probably always count on opposition when you try something new.

I next did a sociogram with the staff to ascertain the best combination of people for each team. Then I selected the team leaders. I got the teams started by meeting with the team leaders and providing input and direction —broad guidelines, really. I gave the leaders a lot of latitude to pull their teams together and, as a unit, to implement changes within these guidelines. I continue to provide periodic reviews with them, but for the most part they have really taken the ball and run with it. Teams in the school make a myriad of decisions regarding students. Each team has approximately 114 students that are shared within the team's schedule. The team jointly determines curriculum for the year, activities for the students, field trips, behavioral consequences, and it meets with parents regularly. Instruction has become thematically centered, involving elective instructors as well as core instructors. Many activities are scheduled for students and frequently involve the parents as well. We recently did a picnic with students and parents which was very successful. Teachers are putting in a lot more time than they ever have, not just at school, but in activities and extra-curricular events. As one teacher tells me regularly, "There is a lot more work when you team, but it is so much more enjoyable, so much more challenging."

I have seen a real change in teachers' attitudes since we began teaming, and so too have teachers. For example, one team leader has described the old attitude as "we'll do only what we have to do." His feeling is that teachers, before, didn't have the ability to make decisions regarding kids; administrators had usurped that role. Since teaming in our school, he makes comments like, "Now we see things that need done, we make the decisions, we do it. We want to do it. We are in control. We have responsibility for the students." He attributes this change in attitude to my willingness to give up a lot of administrative power. As he said, "Our principal was not afraid to do this, and it is the greatest thing that has ever happened to us."

I really see my role as one where I provide the impetus, the push, to get things started. Then the teachers take over. I have to monitor progress, of course, but teachers are capable of making decisions. I just need to nurture them. For example, one team leader finds ways to use each team member's strengths fully. By capitalizing on everyone's area of expertise, he said, we can do so much more for the kids. The teacher explained that at first he needed to provide a lot of direction for the team, but since then, the team has functioned as a unit, making decisions together about what they want to do.

This same teacher finds that teaming has created a very child-centered approach to what teachers do in the school. As we have become involved with our teams, we have found that we want to do more with the students; we try to expose students to things that in an ordinary school framework we don't do. In addition, he finds that team members have become very closely united. You see strengths in your colleagues you never knew existed. He also finds that each team's creativity and ideas trigger other teams to innovative approaches. We're seeing things from all our teams that are unique, new, wonderful. There is a whole new respect for our colleagues.

Overall, there is a different atmosphere at this school. I have noticed that in the faculty lounge, teachers are closer, more open with one another, and have fun together. On the playground, student fights and discipline problems have diminished.

Teaming is not the answer to everything. You are still going to have problems. What teaming does is allow you to deal with them in a different way with a lot of input and support.

The same teacher that I initially approached about becoming one of the team leaders has adamantly emphasized that he would never go back to the oldway, the "school-before-teaming" way: "I look forward to coming to school each day now. If this was a management conspiracy to get teachers to do more work, then fine, that's great, because guess what? We want to do more work! We want to be more involved and responsible with our students!"

This principal made some decisions herself regarding teaming; others she turned over to staff. What messages did her choices communicate to her teachers? Why was this strategy so powerful?

What were the benefits of teaming for the teachers, the students, the climate of the school?

THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM OF TEACHERS IN TEAMS:

Harrison Middle School

Three years ago I suggested the idea of interdisciplinary teaming with my staff. "This is just an idea," I told them. "I would like you to think about working with other staff members to integrate your curriculum and to focus on the needs of kids." When I interjected this idea, I had no notion that these teams would develop into the successful, productive, rewarding groups that exist today!

One of the biggest surprises has been the shared leadership that occurred. I never dreamed it would be this powerful. Initially, I foresaw teaming among teachers as a means to create "smallness" out of the "bigness." In a school of eight hundred sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, this was important. I also wanted to develop staff collegiality and increase student learning. All three have occurred, but they have done so as a result of the shared leadership and responsibility that teachers have assumed. This doesn't just happen without the increased level of interaction and leadership among staff.

After I started the staff thinking about the idea of interdisciplinary teaming, I encouraged teachers to visit schools that had already implemented the program. Several teachers took advantage of the opportunity, and were excited about what they saw. Additional teachers then arranged visitations. We met afterwards as a total staff to discuss what had been seen. Some teachers were ready to implement the program immediately, while others were reluctant. Those that were ready, went ahead with planning, encouraging others to "volunteer." The plans were accepted and implemented fairly quickly by other staff members/teams, because they were generated by teachers.

I then began a program for recognizing achievement of the teams and gave praise for the teachers willing to take the risk of trying something new. I made sure that I shared with the total staff what the various teams were doing and how they were doing about doing it. At the end of the first year, I invited staff from other schools to come in and share innovations they had found particularly effective. I made sure I immersed my staff in the concept until it became a viable program in our school.

Today, the entire school is teamed, and team leaders have assumed full responsibility for facilitating decision making within their teams. The ability to make decisions as a team has been such a rewarding experience for us as a staff. Working together as a collegial group, teachers make decisions regarding curriculum, strategies for teaching the curriculum, and behavior techniques. Teachers know what is good for kids and appreciate

having thepower to make decisions in this interest. I make sure they know how much I value their abilities.

Teams constantly look at how to best meet student needs and their goal is to have students be on task, productive, successful in every class, and to reach the highest level of intellectual and personal achievement possible. It used to be that teachers would lose sight of this focus and get bogged down in side issues and confrontation. They forgot what this is really all about—the kids!

Because of the work of the team leaders, teams function much as student study teams now, and little deviation from achievement of the goal of maximum student learning occurs. Before our teaming, students never had any intervention between period one and period two, or between period two and period three. Now they hardly get out the door before the teachers are talking about what they can do together to take care of the problem and get the kid back on task. Recently, we were able to create a new class part way through the year. Usually, this would be an opportunity for teachers to 'dump' the problem students. Instead, teachers met and selected students who would fit well together, work well together, and ones that could benefit most from the change. I have never seen this happen before.

Collective wisdom is what I'm really talking about when I talk about my teams. One head is good, two are better, and five or six are even better. Since teaming and shared leadership, curriculum has been fully meshed between content areas, with thematic units providing structural guidelines. Referral and suspension rates in the school have dropped by 64%. Both students and teachers are much more accountable, students in their on-task behavior, teachers in their procedures. CAP, CTBS, and proficiency test scores are up. New teachers and students find a strong sense of support. And "teacher talk" is always on improvement "in the interest of the kids." I brag about what my teachers are doing every chance I get.

What similarities do you see between this case and the preceding one?

What new ideas about teacher leadership does the case contribute?

REORGANIZING AND SUPPORTING TEAMS:

Mayfield Middle School

All the teams had been formed, but I changed them, all of them but one that was working so well that I felt that to make changes within the team would be difficult. What I did was send out a personnel questionnaire to all the staff and I asked them to please give me first, second, and third choices of who they'd like to work with. I used that as a guideline. In some cases, they got their first choice, their second choice, or in some cases, they didn't get any choice, because new people came on board in September.

I wanted people to interact with each other, and I felt that the way the teams were set up wasn't working. The communication wasn't going. They weren't having team meetings, they weren't talking except about kids that were getting in trouble in their classrooms. I felt it needed to be more than that. It needed to be talk about kids, but not about what they've done, but about what we can do to really make it more positive for them and to start building their self-esteem. One of the things I really talked about before we started school a year ago, was about how kids need to be treated in a manner that gives them dignity, where they feel that positive things are happening to them. It's so easy for it to turn around and be the opposite, be negative. Then students feel really left out and feel that middle school is too difficult. Students come from elementary school where they have one teacher. With six teachers, it can be overwhelming. It's so easy to lose them. And so I wanted to change the structure of the teams. I have seen what good teaming can do for kids. I know that good teaming works.

I didn't change anything last year. I laid the groundwork with my personnel questionnaire in February. Then in May, I talked to the teachers and told them, "This is what I'm going to be doing." If their teams were being changed, I explained to them at that point that they were having new team members.

I felt that the team leader needed to be a strong leader. Sometimes, by changing the teams around a little, a different person can bring a new focus to the group. I think that's happening this year. I'm seeing more teaming, more types of interdisciplinary units being done as well as more of a field trip/learning experience approach. It isn't taking place with all the teams, but more are becoming involved.

There has been some resistance, and there still is. The way I have gotten past that is by doing a lot of talking about *Caught in the Middle* and middle school recommendations. Also, every time I talk to teachers, I find a way to include that I am student-oriented, that I really care about kids. At each meeting we have, I let them know that I care about what kids do and what

happens to them. I also talk to them about things I have gained through my association with the California League of Middle Schools. I begin every staff meeting with research and facts—not to be boring, but to be informative, to give information to teachers. When they realize that we're not the only middle school going through reform, that it's almost every middle school in the state of California, they feel more confident about what we're doing.

The teachers who have been the most resistant are the veteran teachers. But even one, who has been here forever, has made some change this year, and is the team leader. I think this is a real positive thing for her.

One of the other things I do is send little notes out to teachers to let them know that I am aware of something I saw that pleased me. One of my notes has printed on it, "I saw your team doing something terrific." It's just a half-sheet, and then I write something on it, a really easy thing, like "I saw your team working to put up a bulletin board," or "I saw your team sharing a room." I try to do this every time I go into a classroom.

I also have something that I call the "Giraffe" award that I give to teachers. We give awards all the time for kids, but I thought, "Teachers need that too." This award is for any teacher who sticks his/her neck out and goes above and beyond. I reward them with a little giraffe I have made up. It's wooden, cute, and they get it when I find something outstanding with their teaching or something else they have done for kids.

I am in the classrooms a lot, and that's difficult for some teachers. They aren't used to having a principal in their room so much. This way I am visible to the teachers and to the students, too. This lets the teachers know that I care about what's going on in their classrooms. It also gives me an excellent viewpoint of what is happening in the school and how students/teachers interact.

I try to take one thing on each year. When you try to do too much it turns people off. It also makes people uneasy. Last year I worked with the teams to get them reorganized. This year, my focus is on the advisor/advisee program. By my taking things slowly, teachers are willing to work with me. They are learning to trust me.

This case begins with the principal's perception that the teaming structure in the school needed to be changed. How was this administrator able to make the needed changes without alienating staff?

DREAMS TO REALITY: TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Sunnyside Middle School

"We are closer now. We are Family. Now when I have a great idea or need support, I can turn to any colleague and feel safe in sharing myself."

"One of the most significant events to happen in my professional career."

"I felt such professional pride and endearment seeing our administrators listening to us, caring for our needs, and immediately working on getting what we wanted."

These remarks were taken from teachers' evaluations of a three-day retreat where teachers and administrators were able to work together as an educational team. The significance of this retreat is that it was teacher-initiated and was the result of a long-term restructuring process generated by teachers and supported by administration.

The restructuring process consisted of having teachers and administrators share in decision making, giving direction for school improvement, and agreeing on consistent educational goals and philosophies. This has given the teachers a sense of professional self-worth, and the realization that not only is it possible for teachers to have an impact on the direction of education, but necessary that teachers do so. Having teachers more empowered has had a tremendous effect on other teachers, students, and parents, in terms of enthusiasm, effectiveness, and self-esteem, and we believe that these important changes can occur at any school.

The process of change began with the identification of the problems, which centered around the decision-making process and communication. Our school was in a state of transitional turmoil. Established teachers, who were pillars of the school, were retiring and being replaced by new and unfamiliar faces. A new principal and vice principal were in the process of becoming familiar with the school and faculty, and adjustments were being made by everyone. Decisions affecting the classroom were being made with limited teacher involvement and input. As a result of these problems, morale was low and there was a general feeling of frustration, isolation, and powerlessness.

Once these problems were identified, solutions needed to be found. A small group of concerned and disgruntled teachers formed a support group where frustrations could be shared. In the process of discussing concerns, a plan for making the necessary changes to meet the teachers' needs began

to take form. First there was a need for developing cohesiveness and familiarity among the staff members in order to establish trust and collegiality, so we asked that our district-wide staff development meetings be held at the individual school sites with a focus on specific school site issues. At Sunnyside, our need was to improve communication and develop cohesiveness. Our inservices were planned to focus on these issues and were run by our teachers. The activities at the inservices initially involved sharing "safe" things about ourselves, such as our most embarrassing teaching moments or reasons why we pursued teaching as our career. As a result, teachers became aware of certain commonalities, and there was a sense of togetherness. In subsequent inservice meetings, the familiarity and cohesiveness were continued, and an identification with the faculty was developed. A more trusting and comfortable working environment was created, allowing the teachers and principal to develop a more collaborative and active process for decision-making.

In the following two years, the staff development inservices not only emphasized communication and collegiality, which further developed the cooperative spirit, but we also focused on exploring educational philosophies and assessing needs for a better school. Because a new sense of mutual trust and respect now existed, our teachers and our principal became a team, working together for school improvement. Teachers now felt able to share their concerns and frustrations and to work collaboratively, and our principal was also able to encourage, support, and facilitate changes. Teacher morale and self-esteem was also elevated with the inception of a Teacher Recognition program. At monthly faculty meetings, two teachers receive positive comments and descriptions of themselves from the other teachers.

As more teachers shared in the decision-making process, they developed a sense of belonging and ownership of the school. The school climate reflected the feelings and priorities of the teachers, promoting a more caring supportive, consistent, positive, and nurturing environment. Not surprisingly, that year our school, as well as many of its teachers and programs, won various awards at the county, state, and national levels. Sunnyside School was recognized as both a California and National Distinguished School. Our English, social science, math, and science teachers received J. Russell Kent awards from the county for their programs. The science program won recognition from the National Science Foundation, California Department of Education, and the California School Board Association (CSBA). Two of our teachers were Presidential Nominees for Teacher of the Year. The recognition of our teachers' efforts and achievement was gratifying and enhanced professionalism and motivation. Many of our teachers were asked to be presenters at various conferences around the state and were able to share their professional expertise as well as learn about

other innovative and effective teaching techniques to further enhance our school's instructional programs.

In response to this eagerness for professional growth, a significant event occurred that eventually led to the culmination of our evolving restructuring efforts. Our assistant superintendent and principal offered teachers in our district the opportunity to attend a weeklong summer institute on thematic teaching. Those teachers who participated became aware of the powerful implications of this innovative teaching approach. In the process of meeting to create interesting and relevant themes, they found that spending extended time together fostered an especially strong familiarity and trust level. Although few inservice hours a year was sufficient for identifying common experiences and for problem solving, a few days of working, sharing meals, and having fun together created a very special bond and afforded the luxury and satisfaction of being creative.

This experience and awareness of having the time to meet and work with each other motivated a few of us to want to plan a retreat for our entire faculty. We felt that the time was perfect for implementing a successful retreat because many important and necessary factors were already in place. We had teachers in leadership roles who could help facilitate group activities, our teachers were receptive and willing to participate in team-building experiences because of past inservice activities; and our principal enthusiastically encouraged and supported teacher empowerment.

After receiving almost immediate approval from our administrators, a few of us began to plan the retreat. We met with our principal and upon stressing the importance of having teachers maintain the control and implementation of the retreat, we defined the goals:

- to promote cohesiveness and collegiality;
- to develop a process by which creative ideas could be supported and implemented;
- to explore individual educational philosophies; and
- to define goals and direction for our school for subsequent years.

The retreat time was structured so that there were activities that would help us accomplish the goals, as well as allow time for personal and professional reflection. Group discussions were planned for identifying characteristics of our favorite teachers that we had when we were students, which was followed by listing qualities of effective teachers. We set aside time for considering the future, which was accompanied by group discussions for determining specific skills for our students' success. Teachers had time to

meet both departmentally and interdepartmentally, and there was also "quiet time" for planning and creating, and for introspection and reflection. It was important to have recreational time for risk-taking and team building. Ours centered on the Sunnyside Olympics, which included many fun and ridiculous team events.

The three days of being together turned out to be both a professional and personal growing experience. The goals of the retreat were met, and everyone felt a special feeling of unity, professionalism, and direction. The resulting changes in our lives as educators and the positive energy and power that we had developed became evident. With teachers collaborating and coming up with a unified plan of instruction, the students noticed and commented on the cohesiveness of the faculty and the consistency they encounter from one class to the next. The agreed-upon plan of instruction by their teachers includes an emphasis on promoting self-esteem, mutual respect for one another, social skills for working with people, and the further development of critical thinking and problem solving abilities. At back-to-school night, parents expressed the higher level of caring, consistency, and enthusiasm that they felt from all of the teachers.

Our Board of Education members, after seeing the extensive results of our retreat, wondered why something this powerful and worthwhile hadn't happened before, and have suggested not only continuing the retreat annually, but expanding it to eventually include the entire district.

We recently had a planning retreat involving the Board members, all district administrators, and teacher representation from all of the schools. A feeling of excellence, professionalism, support and trust was developed. We also recognized a strong need to establish better communication and more involvement with everyone in the district, and a definite plan of action was developed to achieve these goals.

Over the past few years, our teachers have been able to make significant changes in the educational direction, philosophies, and goals for our school. The results of having our teachers more empowered has had many powerful implications that has affected the students, teachers, administrators, and community. We have found that given the time and support, it is possible for teachers to have a greater impact on improving classroom instruction and on determining the future of education, and we believe it can occur at any school. In order for such changes to occur, it is imperative that certain factors be in place at the school site:

- There must be a familiarity and trust established for open communication amongst the staff members.

- Administrators need to be encouraging and supportive of teachers collaborating.

- Teachers should be empowered so that the assessment of needs, providing direction and vision, and decision making are shared with adminstrators.

- Teachers must be willing to take on professional responsibilities for providing leadership, sharing their expertise, and for becoming a part of an educational team.

This is a case of teachers taking the initiative to empower themselves. Why were their strategies successful? How did they exhibit good leadership skills? What was the role of the administrators?

Keeping Staff Moving and on Target

The need for the school leader to assume active responsibility for his/her most valuable resource—the staff—is an ongoing task. As contextual changes occur over time, school administrators engage in continual efforts to support the staff's capacity to perform their work effectively. With respect to reform, this task takes on additional dimensions. Making changes can be threatening, frustrating, demanding, discouraging, and difficult. Keeping staff enthused and involved requires an awareness on the part of the administrator of the challenges of implementing reform and the realities of the change process. Such awareness allows the administrator to anticipate, and perhaps avoid, some of the negative feelings that are likely to arise.

The examples discussed on the preceding pages illustrate ways in which administrators attempt to empower their staff members. Building the self esteem of staff regarding their implementation efforts and reinforcing that regularly help remind them that their hard work is valued. Any strategies that administrators regularly use to reinforce and reward staff for work well done can become especially potent as sources of motivation and legitimacy during the change process.

One of the observations of veteran middle school administrators is the importance of early successes as a factor in staff motivation. How and when the crew reaches the first milestone in the journey contributes to their confidence in the value of the proposed voyage and in their own capacities to reach their destination. This notion is addressed in the later section *Ports of Call*, which describes some of the considerations administrators and their staffs make in planning the course of their journey.

While the need and the strategies for developing and maintaining staff morale during a reform effort are no different from what is required at other times, administrators reported one reform-specific role that they performed to support

their staff—this was to keep staff focused on their collective vision and mission. One administrator, for example, describes how his staff keeps their vision in mind at all times: "The mission . . . becomes the general arbiter which guides teachers' decisions on a daily basis. That is, when making a decision the teacher can ask him or herself whether it is 'achieving the mission.'" Incorporating the school's stated mission into the way in which work is carried out both legitimates the reform effort and keeps staff on target.

Another administrator describes how his staff revisits the school mission each year: "[The planning] process has been continued each year. The new staff is oriented to the current program, immersed in the culture of the middle school and taught to work with team members as the entire program is reviewed and modified and new programs developed." This process allows the administrator to accomplish two goals: keeping the continuing staff members reminded of the school vision and beginning to incorporate new staff into the crew. As the composition of the crew changes over time, the school vision can be a key tool for maintaining the reform effort.

The case which follows, **The Transition to Teaching Teams**, describes the lengthy process that one school underwent to implement one component of middle school reform. This story illustrates some of the realities of making change and some of the ways that the captain's strategies enter into that process. As you read, consider all of the variables that were juggled over time to achieve the final outcome.

THE TRANSITION TO TEACHING TEAMS:

Mountain Middle School

The concept of teaching teams is a distinctive characteristic of middle school education, and for very good reason. When successful teachers wish to join together in a teaching team, the potential for really meeting the needs of early adolescents becomes greater. Team members encourage and support each other, share ideas, learn from each other, build on each other's strengths, spread the effect of their combined creativity, and ultimately build an ideal climate for learning and for enhancing students' self-concept.

At Mountain Middle School the transition to full teaching teams has taken ten years. Next year, the eleventh year, there will be three grade-level core teams of 100 students and four teachers each; one combination core team of 100 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders with four teachers; and one unified arts of team of six teachers in physical education, home economics, art, and industrial arts. Each of the four core teams will send its 100 students to the unified arts team for two periods, creating joint prep periods for the core teams. These **joint prep periods** are a **must** for the success of teaching teams. The unified arts team will schedule itself so each member will have a personal prep period each day. Then, to create joint prep periods for the unified arts team, each of the core teams will hold their students for one of the two unified arts periods one day each week, creating four prep periods each week for the UA team.

The road to this "full teaching teams" organization was taken by gradually increasing the numbers of two-teacher and four-teacher teams, starting the first year with all self-contained teachers in the sixth grade. In the second year, two of the sixth grade teachers asked to team together with 50 students. One teacher taught language arts and social studies for two-periods with 25 students while the other teacher taught math and science for two periods with 25 students, and then they switched students for the next two periods. They often used their four periods flexibly, breaking from the period-by-period and subject-by-subject routine. Finding curriculum topics that blended, they decided to jointly plan and conduct learning activities around themes. The jointly planned learning activities were exciting, used variable length periods of time, made sense to the students, and at the same time allowed for meeting the individual subject goals.

In the third year, two more teachers asked to join the original two, and they became a team of four working with 100 students in math, social studies, language arts, and science. Each of the four teachers had a subject-area strength. During joint prep periods they discussed their 100 students, emphasizing academic achievement and self-concept. They also planned-interdisciplinary learning activities around common themes in their curriculum areas. Eventually the remaining two self-contained sixth grade

teachers formed a team and functioned much the same as the first two-person team.

As the years progressed, the seventh- and eighth-grade teachers formed into four-teacher teams with 100 students each. The remaining students in those grades were taught by single subject teachers. The teams functioned much the same as the sixth-grade teams. Again, joint prep periods were important for planning programs emphasizing special help for the students and for planning interdisciplinary instruction.

In the ninth year, two teachers formed a team with a combination of 50 seventh and eighth grade students. The seventh graders stayed with that team the next year as eighth graders. In the tenth year the team expanded to four teachers with 100 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. This became the first combination team or multi-grade/interdisciplinary team for this school. During that tenth year the scheduling was difficult, with each pair of the four-teacher team having joint prep periods, but the all-important joint prep periods for all four teachers was not possible. This has become remedied in the ideal eleventh year schedule, as explained above in the second paragraph, where all teams have guaranteed joint prep periods.

Orchestrating the change to teaching teams is an important, delicate transition. In an earlier experience, I administered the implementation and sustained effort of a four-teacher interdisciplinary team in Minnesota. I used that concept and their activities and materials in discussions with interested teachers at Mountain. Articles on teaming from *The Middle School Journal* (National Middle School Association) provided ideas and motivation for "what if" discussions among interested teachers. Our whole staff spent a day visiting other middle schools in eastern Wyoming and northern Colorado on a school district inservice day during our first year as a middle school. The visits led to "sharing session" faculty meetings during the next month. All of these kinds of experiences gave heart and a willingness to risk a departure from self-contained sixth-grade classes to the first two-teacher team.

That first two-teacher team itself became the model for others, and it led to the four-teacher team the next year. Thereafter, continuing positiveness by those involved in teaming arrangements continued to be the main stimulus for efforts by gradually increasing numbers of teachers. I continued to purposefully schedule meetings of teachers centered around selected appropriate articles from *The Middle School Journal* and other middle school literature. Several staff members attended a National Middle School Conference. As the principal, I continued to fashion master schedule possibilities for staff discussions. These schedules were designed to facilitateteaming arrangements. I also held regular meetings with the teams to allow for an avenue of communication and positive reinforcement. It

became obvious that teaming success needs to be measured in longer periods of time, so that the daily and weekly ups and downs do not become the barometer and cause discouragement. As time passed, interest grew, experience increased, and our confidence built slowly but positively.

Other middle schools, hearing of our efforts at teaming, invited us to present inservice sessions for them. The presentation opportunities were affirming experiences for those of our staff who planned and presented them. Several such trips became positive strokes for our school and made believers of increasing numbers of the staff.

Our school was selected as one of thirty exemplary middle schools in the first National Secondary School Recognition Program in 1983. Teaming arrangements were among the noteworthy elements upon which we were selected. Our willingness to try and our unswerving efforts to make appropriate program changes also helped in our selection. And, best of all, it caused our staff and students to believe that we had a good school.

As a leadership style I believe in allowing staff to generate their own innovations through stimulating growth experiences and peer motivation. I exercised a great deal of patience in allowing a degree of team arrangements that fell somewhat short of full-school teaming during year ten. However, in so doing, the prospects for full-school teaming for year eleven (next year) are excellent. The teachers became definitely ready after personally realizing the shortcomings of the year-ten arrangement. And, more importantly, during that tenth year I became much more confident in planning to implement empowerment of teachers through team-based management. In team-based management, teams of teachers have full responsibility for the team budget, scheduling their blocks of time, facilities utilization, student self-concept growth, and interdisciplinary learning activities. Such management places decision-making with accountability where it benefits students the most, at the teacher level. Managing the concepts of shared decision making, empowerment of teachers, and team-based management are concepts that we as principals and staff have begun to learn, and will continue to learn, together.

It may appear to some that this transition to full teaming has been slow. It is due in part to the leadership style mentioned above. It is also due to our involvement in a new building project, 1983-1985. The architect vitally involved us, and we spent considerable time and effort to develop a building to truly enhance the middle school philosophy. During that time our intensity toward teaming slowed considerably. However, we regained our vitality uponentering the new building, and it became every bit as accommodating to teaming as we planned that it would.

Ten Years! Could it have been done faster? How did they hold on for so long?

Do you think they have gained any benefit by going slowly?

Could your school, using the slowly evolving model of this school, make a purposeful plan to accomplish somewhat the same elements in 40% of the time (4 years)?

Notice how the early efforts serve to show others that it can be done. Have pilot efforts worked this way for you? Why or why not?

The teachers got recognition and rewards of several kinds over the years. Are some of these sources open to you? Other sources?

NAVIGATING

"Navigation is the process of directing the movements of a craft from one point to another. To do this . . . is an art."

(American Practical Navigator)

The voyage of school reform is a long one. The excitement of getting launched is followed by months of sailing on the open seas. In the previous section we looked at "human factors," working with the crew to polish their skills and maintain harmony. The captain is also responsible for keeping the ship on course and making progress toward the destination. Navigation involves knowing where you are in relationship to the destination, monitoring weather conditions, plotting a course, and adjusting as needed along the way. In this section we explore the process of navigation in middle grades reform.

One aspect of navigation is setting up structures and processes that serve as navigational aids and provide the framework for charting a course. A school needs to have ways of "taking a reading" of where it stands in relationship to the goal. These include needs assessment processes such as a Program Quality Review, informal surveys, open communication channels and analyses of test data. A school needs, as well, to look outside, to "scan the horizon," to check the weather report and be aware of changing external conditions. And it needs processes for charting a course: strategic planning processes, decision-making mechanisms, and action planning procedures.

Setting up navigational structures is only the beginning. Navigation requires constant surveillance. The captain (or first mate) must be alert at all times, monitoring the readings and adjusting course as needed. Leaving port with the vessel, headed for the final destination across miles and miles of ocean, requires continual monitoring of progress and frequent adjustments to remain on course.

This is one of the most difficult and trying parts of the voyage and there are no steadfast blueprints for action. Each voyage is different, even across the same expanse traversed by numerous ships beforehand, and must be handled independently, based on the unique conditions of that particular crossing. Just as the captain must be ready for unforseen weather conditions, conditions which may change at any moment, so too must the administrator "anticipate the unexpected" and be ready to use available resources well. The trickiest part of the journey is during these unexpected moments, when the captain and crew must work hard to stay on course. There will be numerous situations that will call for flexibility and alterations in course; without such adjustments, these conditions may critically affect progress. Guiding a school through change, like navigating a ship, is an art.

The narratives that were provided by middle school administrators illustrating their experiences "on the high seas," navigating toward their destination, fall into two categories. First of all, there are numerous organizational structures, both at the school level and at the district level, that are used as a means of monitoring and checking progress. These structures also serve to apprise the administrator of any alterations, or deviations, from the intended destination, thus allowing adjustments to be made to remain on course. How does a leader know which structure to tap into? How does a leader maximize the usefulness of the structure? Secondly, various unexpected opportunities and/or problems will arise that must be enhanced and used, modified or eliminated, in order to continue forward. How does an administrator distinguish between an opportunity and a problem? Is it possible to turn what may appear to be a problem into an opportunity that advances progress?

In the pages that follow, each of these two major ideas is explored and discussed in depth. Illustrations from administrators' narratives highlight various decision-making processes and strategies, as well as provide examples of administrative insights used to advantage while forwarding the change process.

Structures to Monitor Progress and Set the Course

Monitoring progress is essentially a process of extrapolation in which past events and present trends are projected forward to future developments. Accuracy depends on there being ample and reliable information, the skill with which it is interpreted, the ability to communicate necessary information to the appropriate parties, and active efforts to use a variety of strategies. In the language of our metaphor, the way a captain handles his crew and equipment makes a difference in the success or failure of the journey. How, then, does a leader gather information that will be accurate, useful, and serve to keep the staff moving forward in the same direction? And more importantly, how does a leader use that information to call forth a vigorous repertoire of strategies to encourage and support progress?

The administrators who have written about successes in this area indicate that they rely on organizational structures as a means of "keeping their finger on the pulse," so to speak. They collect information, then implement strategies, strategies that allow for review, rethinking of direction, re-sharing the "vision," additional planning, support, rewards, training, in some instances slowing down, and ultimately, making necessary adjustments and program modifications.

The ways in which four principals use organizational structures as they monitor their progress and pursue reform are described in the following cases: **Evolutionary Planning, Structured Problem Solving, Using Program Quality Review, and Keeping Our Vision Intact**. The principal of **Grandview** school uses summer workshops as review. Teachers in the school compare their program to that outlined in *Caught in the Middle*. In addition, the staff conducts a yearly program evaluation and uses the summer workshop time to examine this data and make modifications in their program. Similarly **Saloma Middle School** developed a regular format to structure their problem solving. A third school, **Miller**, recently went through Program Quality Review, and the principal used this review mechanism as a means not only of assessing progress towards reform objectives,

but also to gain credibility with his staff about objectives which needed to be furthered. The principal of the fourth school, **Glenridge**, relies on administrative team meetings and team leader meetings to provide feedback as the staff implements change. As you read the four cases, consider how the use of these organizational structures provides the administrator and the staff important information regarding their progress. Obviously, there are numerous structures that exist in a school and district. Each principal needs to determine what works best in the particular circumstances. What structures exist in your school, and which do you think you would be likely to use? Why? Also notice the various additional strategies used within the framework of organizational structures by these principals. Why are these effective?

EVOLUTIONARY PLANNING:

Grandview Middle School

In November of 1986, the Superintendent and Board decided to add seventh- and eighth-grade students in our district and develop a middle school program, rather than expand the elementary school. In the summer of 1987, three teachers and I met to plan for the school's opening in the fall. We began by developing our mission statement, our discipline plan, our class offerings, etc.

This process has been continued each year since then. I decided to use this process on a yearly basis because it had been so successful initially. I also felt that it was a useful means of determining where we were in our goal to become a "middle school." In addition, it gives us a chance to orient the new staff to the current program and enables our entire staff to become immersed in the culture of the middle school, working with team members as the school's entire program is reviewed, modified, and new programs developed.

Next summer, seven or eight staff members will continue this process with the goal of revising our current program as needed, strengthening our counseling component, strengthening our student activities, and developing a parent club.

Through our summer program we have found a way to address our growth in an orderly way. Staff begins to gather data as the school year begins, knowing that we will need that data during the next summer's planning period. These summer sessions have evolved into a shared procedure, with staff and administration working together to develop all facets of the middle school program.

One very valuable aspect of our summer planning sessions has been our use of *Caught in the Middle* as our resource document. We evaluate our program against this publication and use it as a "needs assessment" tool. It helps to keep us focussed on where we're going. We also visit other schools to see what they're doing, bringing this information back to this summer planning time. We find that we can often adopt/adapt a number of strategies into what we are doing. For example, our classroom management system, discipline plan, and student selection by colors all came from one of our visits.

One outgrowth of these summer planning sessions has been the use of our staff meetings as open forums for procedural change to be discussed. All staff meetings are viewed as problem solving sessions, rather than as administrative communication devices.

Note how this administrator continued with a procedure that worked initially. Do you think this was a good idea?

How do you think the staff meeting format evolved out of the summer planning sessions?

What strategies did the administrator use in conjunction with use of the summer planning sessions?

STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING:

Saloma Middle School

When I think back over the past three to five years, I have to attribute a large part of our success to our annual planning and evaluation process. This has been a key event in the life of this school!

When I came here eight years ago the faculty was expressing a lot of complaints; some were really petty and others were pretty serious. In any case, I documented the concerns as they came in and tried to take care of as many of them as I could. It's surprising what little effort it took to take care of many of these problems, as I look back.

At first the faculty seemed skeptical, as though they were used to things being started and stopped. But once they saw the follow through, they really started participating! Stuff was coming in fast and at odd times, with the growing expectation there would be an immediate response.

That's when we decided to establish a more structured approach to airing concerns and finding solutions. So, beginning in April each year we survey parents, community, staff, and students. Specific questions about our program are asked and then this information is joined with test scores, attendance data, and various other records we have on hand.

The next step occurs late in April when we take a staff day off campus. We bring in an outside facilitator and really have a "heart to heart" with regard to what we've done and where we need to go next.

Then in May we bring together board members, School Site Council members, classified, and certified staff for a four-hour barbecue dinner meeting to help us identify our program effectiveness focus for the next school year. We usually work with four or five small, heterogenous groups which again are under the overall direction of a group facilitator. We usually succeed in creating a very specific and widely supported direction for the school for the coming year.

Over the summer an implementation plan is written through the collective efforts of a small but representative committee of those involved in the process. Finally, just prior to the beginning of school we sponsor another get-together among faculty, board members, and others from the community to see what our school effectiveness plan will look like for the year. This gathering is really a kind ofcelebration. We hold it at the beach, have another barbecue, and everyone gets to mingle informally. Everyone leaves with a great sense of knowing and affiliation. We come away with a true sense of what we want to do!

This process has been the key to our success! People now understand that there is a regular and orderly process for dealing with concerns. Also, we don't have to react immediately to everything! People seem more patient about the various problems that arise because they know we have a system for solving problems and they depend on it. Moreover, it has allowed us to devote more of our energy to major new innovations in the school. It's amazing how easy it is to implement marvelous new programs when you have the buy-in and sense of ownership we have achieved in our school.

Did the administrator realize before implementing the annual planning sessions that they would have the impact that they did? Was she taking a risk? Would you take the same risk?

Note the connection between staff, district, parents, students, and community. Why would the principal involve so many parties?

Why does the administrator involve the district staff and board members after involvement with the other parties? How does this impact morale of the staff? Would it be as effective done in reverse?

What additional advantages are achieved by the informal, social settings of these meetings?

Our school is a very small school, and I had been having problems with staff over some of the changes I felt needed to take place. I had been very enthusiastic when *Caught in the Middle* came out, and I wanted to see our school make some of the changes it recommended. But I met with a lot of resistance from about half of my teachers. We had talked openly about their concerns on numerous occasions, but they were still reluctant to get totally involved.

When our cycle came up for PQR, I realized that this might be just the tool I needed to win the last few teachers over. And I was right. It ended up being a very positive process, and one which enabled me to get several teachers "behind the ball and swinging!"

I think the most valuable part of the process was the "self review" which we had to conduct. I asked several teachers to participate as part of the team to do this, and made sure that some of my recalcitrant staff members participated. The team then apprised the staff of the process we would be going through so they understood why it was being conducted and what it was intended to achieve.

Conducting the self-review brought many issues to light in a positive way. Many things which we had been doing well were discovered, and you'd have thought the school had just received a million dollars! It also became a real shared process, and one which teachers claimed ownership for immediately.

The actual review made it apparent that we had some work to do, but it was all done in such a positive way that we felt comfortable with it. Many guidelines and a timeline were provided. None of the staff felt the review to be threatening. If anything, it was exactly the opposite. The teachers wanted to get to work immediately to improve our program. The PQR provided that little extra shove that I had felt to be lacking. If anything, it gave my efforts more credibility.

It has also been of benefit to me as an administrator. Through this process I had a chance to hone my skills, to really tune them up, in terms of being able to assess problem areas more clearly and avoid wasting a lot of time. I also think I learned how to better establish direction and get staff buy-in. It has been a real morale building tool for all of us, as well as an instructional improvement tool.

How does this administrator use the PQR process to assist with changes already underway in the school?

Note how staff feels rewarded and acknowledged as a result of the review. Why was this a powerful motivation?

Are there other organizational structures similar to PQR that could be utilized to assist with middle school reform? Which ones might you use? Why?

KEEPING OUR VISION INTACT:

Glenridge Middle School

It is easier to determine a school vision than to have the vision become all encompassing and shared by all. I feel communication is the only answer. At Glenridge Middle School, we have established two means of communicating regularly with one another. First, we have our eleven-member administrative team made up of classified and certificated staff. We meet twice a month and plan for four-to-five-week blocks. We always try to include communication systems for each activity we plan. We identify means of supporting the classroom program and look to solve any problems which have come up since we met last. Second, we have team leaders who meet once a month to work on curriculum design, instructional goals and objectives, and to discuss our partnership school status. As principal, I act as the liaison between these two groups.

I then meet regularly with other district principals involved in middle school reform to compare and share efforts. The district provides the leadership to conduct these meetings; our vision of change, therefore, is known throughout the district and by staff at all levels.

The principal's role is critical as he communicates between each group. How do you think he guides progress as he moves from group to group?

What differences do you see in the communication processes of Grandview and Glenridge? Do you think the principals have chosen well for their particular circumstances?

Dealing With The Unexpected

Just as the captain of a ship must be prepared for changes in the weather and be ready to act immediately, so too must the administrator of the school anticipate that there will be many unexpected surprises that will occur that will require immediate action. It is this time of coping and problem solving that is the trickiest part of the journey. No other form of navigation requires such continuous alertness. At no other time is navigational judgment, based on experience, so valuable. The ability to work rapidly and correctly interpret all available information, always keeping "ahead of the vessel," may mean the difference between safety and disaster.

In a major study of secondary school reform, Miles *et al* (1987) emphasized the importance of vigorous coping and problem solving mechanisms. They identified 25 strategies that varied in intensity. Overall, they reported "school improvement will never be problem free...careful problem-sensing and deliberate coping efforts are the hallmark of success."

Some of these challenges are described in the three cases which follow: **A Critical Test, Common Planning Time for Curriculum Integration,** and **Seizing an Opportunity**. The successful administrators who reported dealing with problems as they went through change revealed the combination of perserverance, ingenuity and flexibility that is required. The first case describes how an administrator worked to gain the cooperation of a key teacher. The second describes how the development of an interdisciplinary team had to be nurtured and encouraged. The third tells how an administrator found an opportunity to develop a thinking skills program.

As you read through the following three cases, pay particular attention to the navigation strategies that the principals use to keep their schools on course and headed for port. Do any of the principals think of their actions as responses to problems that cannot be resolved? Are they willing to consider secondary strategies if they are needed? Do they ever "scrap" something they are doing and try a different tack? What is it that makes the ultimate difference between staff concert and staff contention?

A CRITICAL TEST:

Johnson Middle School

The process of reaching a decision on the Partnership Schools application had been hectic. The gurus of participatory decision making don't tell you how to shrink a year's worth of discussions into a few weeks to meet a deadline. After much subdivision of tasks, a few unavoidable short-cuts, and a lot of sweat and tears, we somehow emerged with an attractive plan and a majority of staff willing to attempt it. But we were still far from a total consensus. When word came that we'd been selected and would have immediate district support for implementation, I faced the reality of a still-divided staff. Key teachers, who had seen many "hot-shot" administrators come and go (often with combat scars), were fence-sitting. Rumor had it that we would never find the five teacher volunteers from English and social studies we needed for our interdisciplinary seventh-grade core.

Putting together the core was a critical test of our Partnership momentum, as well as a crucial first step away from an entrenched departmental structure. It **had** to succeed. But the core had to draw from two departments that housed our most skeptical fence-sitters. To work well, it needed to bridge some age and experience boundaries, as well as pull in some of the doubters. The last thing we needed was a staff split between young Partnership enthusiasts and a cynical old guard sniping from the sidelines.

A key figure had to be N., a respected English teacher with an elementary and social studies background. I approached her with an invitation to attend the Social Studies Framework Conference, hoping that it might both rekindle her enthusiasm for social studies and also spark an interest in the core. The strategy backfired! N. attended, all right, and at an English department meeting the next week she blew up, stating, "It's absurd for us to put all that work into the core when in two years the State is going to give half our curriculum to the sixth grade! I don't want to have anything to do with it!"

Back at the drawing board, the alternatives all looked dismal. N. was not only critical to any bridge-building, but her teaching background was ideal for the core. A few days later an opportunity came to hash things out. Over our bag lunches, N. told me what she'd told the English department, and I accepted her point: the new framework did indeed make this an awkward time to be attempting an English/social studies integration. And as she explained her reservations, it became clear that N. really did believe in interdisciplinary teaching and hadn't totally ruled out teaching the core.

Indeed, most of N.'s concerns were ones we all needed to address, I realized. At a district social studies committee meeting I brought up her

curriculum concerns and helped push through an interim solution. It called for bringing sixth- and seventh-grade teachers together to work out a plan for sharing resources, and letting the core build on materials from the old seventh-grade curriculum.

In the end, N. agreed to teach in the core. Was it the interim curriculum solution? Was it my willingness to fight for it? Was it the sense of professional challenge, of being genuinely needed and uniquely qualified? Or some combination of factors? Whatever the reasons, things have worked. At this date, midway through our first year, N. is an enthusiastic spokesperson for the core. The core itself is the bridging and integrating factor in the school as a whole, and there are teacher initiatives for cores in other grades and subject areas.

Are rumor networks worthy sources of information as you check weather conditions?

What is the pivotal action between N. and the principal that eases the impasse?

Why do you think N.'s concerns were ones that everyone needed to address? Does N. become the model for the rest of the staff?

Note that this principal was not willing to stop at the first, or even the second, incident of resistance. He simply continued forward with the resolve to have the necessary changes happen. Would you be as willing to press forward?

COMMON PLANNING TIME FOR CURRICULUM INTEGRATION:

Star Valley Intermediate School

As part of *Caught in the Middle* implementation, we decided to establish an eighth-grade core composed of four teachers in four disciplines: English, history, math, and science. We selected the team based on their previously expressed desires to integrate and align curriculum per *CIM* and district curriculum guides. Scheduling of the core became our highest summer priority and we assigned all four teachers a common preparation period and the same lunch period.

We found it more necessary than we had thought to nurture curriculum integration. None of the four wanted to provide the necessary leadership for long-term planning. They were reluctant to identify instructional themes and objectives which would lend themselves to interdisciplinary teaching. "Departmentalized" thinking continued to pervade the group.

The common prep time has been a most helpful ally. We meet with the core teachers and suggest and encourage integrating curriculum and modifying the schedule to achieve that. The teachers, through the vehicles of shared support in disciplinary matters and shared behavioral goals for the students, are becoming more bold in dealing with curriculum. As they become more comfortable with one another through those vehicles, their confidence in dealing with other staff members and support staff is enhancing the programs.

We don't believe we fully realized the necessary simplicity of the beginning steps in this cooperative venture. However, due to our two identified frustrations, we were forced to slow down and allow the developmental process to occur so that the core has an identity that is different from the identity of its four teachers, and consequently, all components of the program became stronger and more cohesive than the program of four individuals.

Note how the built-in common prep structure supported the realization of the need for more fully nurtured curriculum integration.

This principal was cognizant of the need to slow down until staff members were ready to go on. What were some of the opportunities for action that became possible as a result of this awareness?

SEIZING AN OPPORTUNITY:

Manzanita Middle School

We implemented Advisory with our students several years ago, providing twenty minutes a day for a variety of activities. Unfortunately, this program was degenerating into free-reading time and/or time to work on homework. Simultaneously, SIP was focussing on the need to improve our CAP scores, particularly in problem solving and geometric relationships. Rather than cut back or curtail our advisory program, I decided to implement problem-solving as part of the Advisory. I met with the SIP committee, and involved our math department. They liked the idea, and we determined to devote two days of our Advisory to the program. We called it HOTS (Higher-Order Thinking Skills).

Two math teachers took the leadership role, providing activities for the teachers to use so they did not feel burdened with having to come up with ideas on their own. They were certainly encouraged to do so, but we didn't want a lot of resistance to surface over being asked to assume another preparation task.

We also decided to rotate the Advisory period during HOTS, thus giving each student two weeks with each teacher on campus. Since both my assistant principal and I teach an Advisory section, we too are involved in teaching HOTS activities. Rotation allows for a wide variety of problems to be presented, and further reduces the preparation time for teachers since each teacher presents one problem-solving activity numerous times over the course of the year.

Many teachers are now designing their own activities and have left the security of the pre-provided ones. It has expanded the concept dramatically, and I am noticing many teachers including higher-order thinking skills in their daily curriculum with other classes. What this really allowed was an opportunity to implement another recommended reform suggestion from *Caught in the Middle*, and at the same time, eliminate the problem of "too much time" in Advisory.

Was the timing "ripe" for this principal's action?

How did the principal's redesigning of the Advisory improve the capacities of the staff, and finally, the organization?

What strategies do you think made the difference in staff buy-in?

What did they lose by this change of direction?

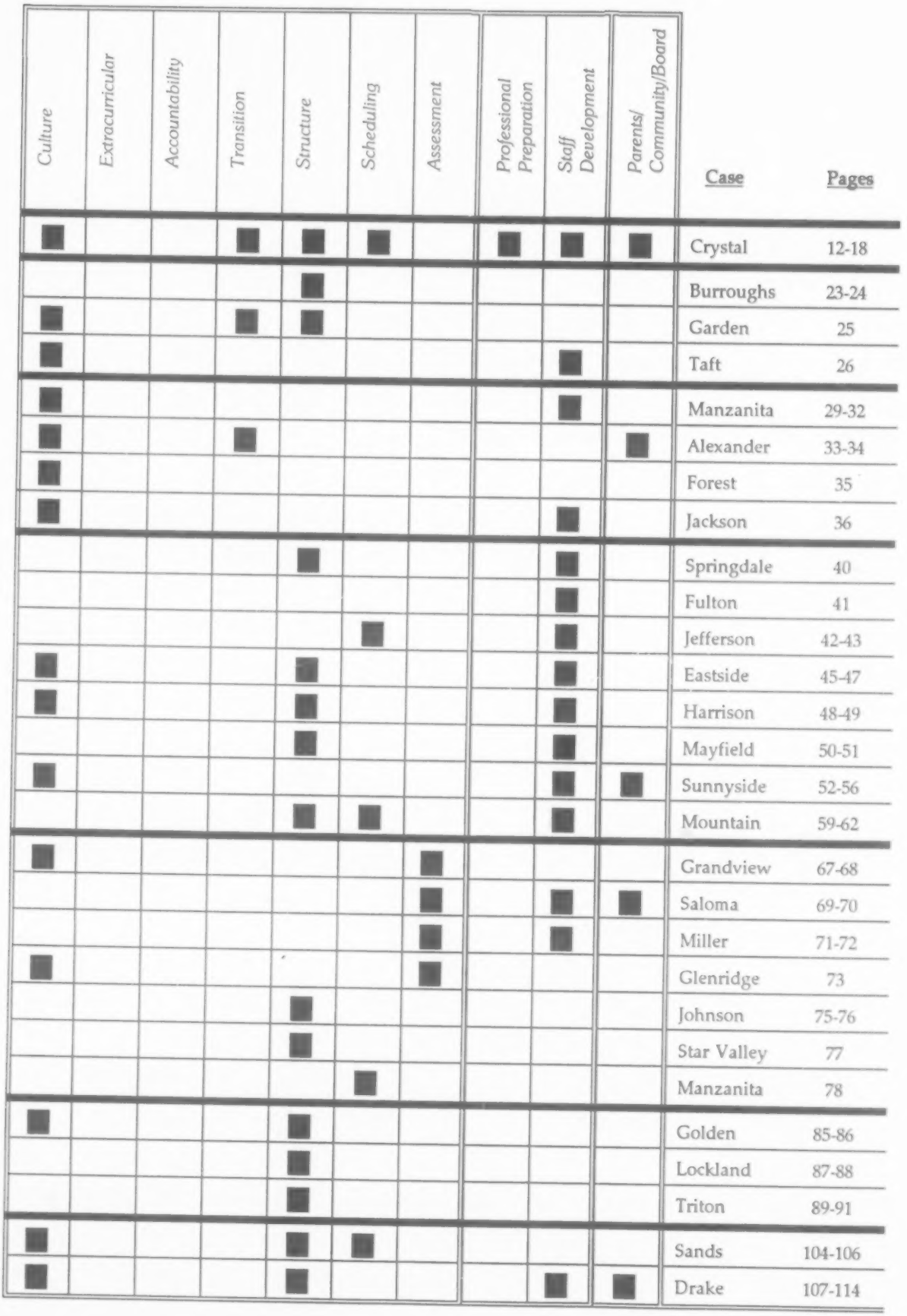
Ports of Call

Honolulu! Liverpool! Marseilles! So many ports out there. So many places to stop. How does the captain of the vessel make the decision to stop in Vancouver, but to skip Honolulu? To head for Marseilles prior to Seattle? To change course midway and steam off for Liverpool, when originally it was not on the itinerary? Most ship captains begin a trip with a very carefully mapped out list of ports, selected on the basis of supply consignments and timetables, cargo values, and estimates of what the ship and crew can accomplish. Changes may be made on route due to special circumstances that arise along the way. For example, perhaps the original timetable was interrupted because cargo loading at the last port was delayed or prolonged excessively. Perhaps the crew has contracted an illness, or has been at sea too long between ports and needs a rest. Adjustments are made.

Just how does this "ports" analogy transfer to middle grades reform? As we have emphasized, middle grades reform is a spirit, an organic process, and a commitment to the needs of children at this age level. If this student-centered philosophy illuminates the final destination, then the individual components of middle grades reform become "ports of call" on the journey: *Core curriculum! Interdisciplinary Teaming! Advisory Period!*

This casebook is not intended to cover in detail the long journeys schools make, or their many ports of call. Details of implementing a specific reform are necessarily left for other documents. (Far West Laboratory is in the process of developing some longer case descriptions of the implementation of specific components of curriculum and instruction.) This casebook does, however, include reference to a number of specific components. The table on the following two pages uses the 22 recommendations in *Caught in the Middle* as a framework and identifies for each case the components that receive some extended discussion. Because we did not solicit full case histories, this should not be taken as a comprehensive survey of what these schools have done. But the table should allow quick access to topics of interest as they are revealed in these cases.

Case	Pages	Core Curriculum	Knowledge	Thinking	Character Development	Learning to Learn	Instructional Practice	Counseling	Equal Access	Diversity	At-Risk	Physical/ Emotional
Crystal	12-18	■					■					
Burroughs	23-24											
Garden	25											
Taft	26											
Manzanita	29-32						■					
Alexander	33-34											
Forest	35											
Jackson	36											
Springdale	40											
Fulton	41											
Jefferson	42-43											
Eastside	45-47											
Harrison	48-49											
Mayfield	50-51											
Sunnyside	52-56											
Mountain	59-62											
Grandview	67-68											
Saloma	69-70											
Miller	71-72											
Glenridge	73											
Johnson	75-76	■										
Star Valley	77											
Manzanita	78			■								
Golden	85-86											
Lockland	87-88					■						■
Triton	89-91						■		■			■
Sands	104-106		■								■	■
Drake	107-114											■


Culture
Extracurricular
Accountability
Transition
Structure
Scheduling
Assessment
Professional Preparation
Staff Development
Parents/ Community/Board
Case
Pages
Crystal 12-18
Burroughs 23-24
Garden 25
Taft 26
Manzanita 29-32
Alexander 33-34
Forest 35
Jackson 36
Springdale 40
Fulton 41
Jefferson 42-43
Eastside 45-47
Harrison 48-49
Mayfield 50-51
Sunnyside 52-56
Mountain 59-62
Grandview 67-68
Saloma 69-70
Miller 71-72
Glenridge 73
Johnson 75-76
Star Valley 77
Manzanita 78
Golden 85-86
Lockland 87-88
Triton 89-91
Sands 104-106
Drake 107-114

This section of the casebook goes on to deal with examples of decision-making. How do the leaders of a school decide which ports to visit and in which order? How do they plot a course over time?

Part of the process of selecting among these various ports is the determination of what each has to offer, and specifically, what each has to offer to you, your staff, your students, and your school. It is important to recognize that there is truly no master blueprint for action. There is no "one right way" to go about scheduling stops in the various ports. What needs to be of primary consideration, however, in making a plan for your particular school, is the overriding concept of what a middle grades education is truly about, remembering that it is more than just stopping at *Advisory Period.* What really needs to be considered here is how does one move ahead best, under the particular circumstances that exist in the school. All of the same considerations that come into play for a ship's Captain exist for an administrator. Perhaps the timing is not right in this school for *Advisory Period.* That's not to say that the time will never be right, but simply that it is not right now. Perhaps your school has already implemented *Advisory Period,* in which case it would be redundant to revisit this port. However, perhaps your school has already implemented an *Advisory Period,* but not in the full spirit of middle grades philosophy. Perhaps you need to revisit this port **for this very reason**.

Just as we embark on our journey of reform in the first place to increase the likelihood of success for our students, so must we consider the value of success for our faculty and our school as we make stops in each of the various ports. It is of primary importance in any reform effort to provide some early successes; these initial successes can make all the difference in how the next steps, the next phases, of the reform process are perceived and on the overall morale of the staff. If the first efforts do not provide a sense of accomplishment and achievement, it is very likely that the frustration level of the staff will be such that neither will ever be experienced. To achieve early success, then, it is important to consider a port that will not be overwhelmingly difficult to reach; it might be wise, for example, to

choose a port that builds on something the staff has already accomplished and feels good about.

Success is more likely to be achieved, too, if a staff does not attempt to undertake too many tasks at once. Taking on six or seven areas of reform at one time may become like a whirlwind tour—overwhelming and, at the same time, superficial. Better to take on one reform effort that makes sense for your school, implement it well and demonstrate success. Staff will be much more willing to "buy into" the next phase of reform because of that backlog of successful experience. In other words, a skillful administrator will go about the process of reform by choosing appropriate and manageable reform areas.

A skillful administrator will also recognize that there will be times when it will be necessary to abandon or alter the original plan for reform. Special circumstances will arise which will necessitate a change in plans, a change of ports. Part of the process of navigating through change is being prepared for surprises and being willing to shift direction to ultimately stay on course. An administrator must be prepared for these changes in direction and be flexible and adaptive to meet the needs which the change of direction will bring about.

The three cases which follow illustrate how staff and administrators went about the process of choosing their ports of call. Some ports were identified early and served as a preliminary map. Notice how, just as some areas were deemed useful and appropriate for the school, others were "put on hold," or set aside, because they were not appropriate at the time. Notice, too, the unifying sense of working continually towards implementing a program that would be in the best interests of the students, one that justly meets the demands of true middle grades reform, true middle grades philosophy.

At **Golden Junior High**, the staff begin the process of middle grades reform and deliberate on how to get started. At **Lockland Middle School**, the administrator

orchestrates a variety of small steps to meet the needs which the change of direction will bring about. At **Triton Middle School**, the principal decides to start from an area of personal strength.

We are at the beginning stages in developing the goals of the middle school concept. As a staff, our original interest was sparked by reading *Caught in the Middle*. We were also motivated by the need to address the middle grades age group through the overall education process to insure that those kids get a quality education compelling them to stay in school.

Staff members read *CIM* separately, then came together in various meetings to discuss their impressions. Some of the pros and cons associated with suggestions in *CIM* were identified and discussed. Among the pros included teaming with other teachers, advocating for junior high advisory groups, and including a common planning/prep period. The fact that *CIM* addresses several aspects of growth including physical, social, and academic areas, elicited a favorable response as well.

The negative impressions focused on the notion of heterogeneous grouping; placing students at various achievement levels within one classroom would make it difficult for the teachers involved. Staff members also felt that it wasn't necessarily important to adopt the *CIM* concepts entirely because Golden Junior High is already addressing areas that *CIM* advocates.

Ten to twelve teachers also visited middle schools in our area to assess the differences in middle grades education. They returned with many notes and thoughts regarding middle schools. Again, they shared their impressions with other staff, in groups and individually, both orally and in writing. Areas of concern were singled out and financial status emerged as a central theme. Without financial commitment from the district, we would be unable to make any real changes in staffing or structure. One immediate financial need that we identified was that funds were necessary for the remainder of the staff to visit other middle schools.

We also felt it important to keep members of the community informed about the evolution of our middle school concepts. We determined to apprise them regularly about the fact that we are making the changes because we're concerned about the kids and because we consider them our number one priority!

The possibility of implementing a middle school program began as a shared vision. Over a period of a couple of years we have really done more than just "look" at adopting middle school concepts. We have spent many hours discussing various scenarios in staff meetings getting group and individual reactions. We have implemented the initial stages of team teaching, and

together we're looking forward to progressively implementing other advances toward a "middle school program."

Golden Junior High made several decisions about areas in which they wanted to implement reform. How did their "vision" affect those decisions?

How did this administrator take into account the notion of "early success" and avoid what could have been a disaster in reform? What effect do you think this had on the staff and the efforts which followed? Why?

Our objective here is to take short steps towards change, and to take them slowly. My style is not to take giant steps, major ones that can rend. Tears are bad and slow the process down. It's far better to move forward slowly and successfully than to find yourself propelled backwards.

We decided to involve our staff in cooperative learning several years ago. We had identified several areas of concern in delivery of instruction and had lots of concerns about our language arts program. With a lot of trial and error, we discovered that students are a good resource to one another. With that discovery, we set up some released time for teachers to visit various classes and workshops on cooperative learning. Over twelve of our staff members are now fully trained and using it in the classroom. I continually urge other teachers to look at these classes as models. If they express interest, I arrange released time for them.

I have implemented an advisory program one day per week, within our present schedule structure. I only did one day because I want teachers to come to me and ask for more. I don't want it to be the other way around. Advisory was one of those areas that could be done slowly and didn't require a huge commitment of resources.

With interdisciplinary instruction, we have set up one pilot team in each of the grade levels. I really see interdisciplinary instruction as creating more involvement in cooperative learning and peer coaching. I especially see cooperative learning being enhanced. The two will enhance one another. There will be a broader understanding of both. Teachers will understand the importance of kids talking and adults listening to kids. I chose to introduce interdisciplinary instruction with pilot groups because it is such a major move in a school. If you jam it to the teachers all in one fell swoop and it doesn't work, then it takes five years to recover. I don't want that to happen.

It is important that teachers view reform as their idea. If they perceive it to be the "administrator's baby," then the chances of them accepting it are much slimmer. This is another reason that I try to move slowly. I also provide as many in-services, released time, etc., as possible. I relieve as many extraneous pressures as possible so teachers can focus on what they need to do. I work to lessen teacher risk as much as I can. At the same time, I encourage them to venture, to try something new.

I see three major issues in wrestling with change. You have to have teacher commitment to the change, you have to recognize that teachers are reluctant

to risk, and you have to, as an administrator, be able to anticipate questions/ concerns, and be prepared to address them in presentations. If you can manage all three, you can implement any change in your school.

Do you agree with this administrator's philosophy of taking small steps in the reform process? Would that work in your school? Why or why not?

Note how this administrator is keyed into change as an ongoing process. He starts reform efforts knowing that it will be awhile before the effort is fully realized. What impact do you think this has on the overall reform efforts of a school?

Sometimes having several projects going at once detracts from effectiveness. How can they be made manageable? When would they be distracting and when would they reinforce each other?

I push active learning at my school because there's no other way to do what needs to be done. It doesn't make much sense to do direct teaching - it would mean being caught 'dead in the water' with the kids, especially our student population.

I want to get us started on interdisciplinary teaming as well, but it just wouldn't work here right now. I need to get a more stabilized faculty first. I had thirteen teachers leave last year. We're considered the bottom of the pile in terms of schools in this area. Everyone wants to be someplace else, so they transfer out. Our school has a lot of racial problems, and most of the students come from poverty-level-income families.

I decided to push active learning because it was something that made sense to me and that I felt I could model well. I knew what I was talking about when I started requesting my teachers to use it. And I could demonstrate it easily.

My master teacher, back when I was student teaching, did so much more than just follow a textbook, assign readings, pass out ditto sheets. I really learned about active learning from her. We didn't have a textbook for our classes, so we started projects. The projects were so exciting for the students, and we were excited too. It made teaching more than just passing on information. Students got involved on many levels, and they enjoyed the process. It's so much more fun to do activity-based teaching. I believe in active learning. You might say it's "my thing." But it works, especially with middle school students.

I'm the master teacher here, and I have to be willing to take risks. I go out into the classrooms and do active learning demonstration lessons all the time. I need to be out there doing it for credibility. If the teachers can see an example, they're much more likely to buy into using it themselves. It's the only way I can hold people accountable. I can expect it, talk about it, and a multitude of other things; but I need to make it public, or it doesn't happen. I have to coach, demonstrate, then expect that it will be implemented. I have twenty-seven teachers, and every teacher, with the exception of one, is doing active learning. I'm not saying they do it all the time. That would be impossible, simply because of the massive preparation work and time commitment that is required. But they are doing it on a regular basis. Some, of course, more than others. I'm really proud of my teachers. *Caught in the Middle* has helped a lot. It has given me additional credibility with the staff, not just with active learning, but with everything we want to accomplish as a middle school. Each month, I bring in twelve or thirteen

substitutes and we get together as a group and share ideas. We talk about where we're going, what we want to accomplish. We take segments of *CIM* and discuss them. When we see something that looks possible for us, I schedule in-servicing for the entire staff. We hold so many in-services that we've become the joke of the district. They call us "The Home of the In-Service!" I also provide time for teachers to observe one another frequently. Every teacher on staff has observed at least one other teacher one time.

I try to involve teachers in the decision-making process as much as possible. With heterogeneous grouping, however, it was not a choice for them. I simply grouped the students, except in math and in some of our GATE classes. Right now, we're all taking a close look at advisory. With all our visits, we've not really seen a good model yet. No one seems to be doing the same thing. No one seems to be satisfied with the program once they've started it. Right now it appears to be "one more thing" that we can live without. It is not high on our priority list. I also have some concerns about working on more than one thing at a time and losing focus. We're concentrating on active learning right now.

I have an idea about where I want to see us go next. I have a vision of all my teachers being involved in interdisciplinary instruction and teaming. I have been promoting teaming, although that's not moving as quickly as I would like. Team teaching sparks active learning, and just makes so much sense as the next step. But the change in staff made it impossible this year. Some teachers are teaming, but very few.

One of the things I would like to see teachers accomplish as they start teaming is being more flexible with their time. I encourage them to do things differently. For example, I ask them, "Why do you have to do math every day?" I think it's just giving them permission to do things differently that makes it more palatable.

Through any change process, it is important to prioritize what you want the teachers to do. I like new things. I like change and doing twenty things at once. Many can't tolerate that level of participation and see it as chaos. I have to be really careful about that. Thank goodness for some of my key teachers here. They're sort of the pulse of the school. They know what's going on. They'll tell me to back off, or they'll tell me to move on ahead. I try to keep a pace that works for everyone.

Notice how this administrator started with something familiar, rather than something with which she had no experience. How did she make this an advantage?

How did this administrator make decisions regarding what reform effort was to follow? Did you agree with her analysis of advisory periods? Do you think it would have made any difference in staff buy-in if she had just implemented an advisory program?

This administrator seems very decisive about some elements of change and moves quickly to implement them. Others she seems content to let the staff research and make choices about. Do you think she has thought out her decisions about the various elements, or are they merely decisions of whim? How can you tell? What do you think the staff's attitude is about their involvement?

Not Alone At Sea

In the previous sections, we have seen many vessels on their voyages. While some have seemed to be flying along alone on the high seas, others have been in constant touch with other ships or with people on shore. Especially for those in the early stages of the journey, it is common to see them reaching out through visits to other sites, touring other ships, and listening to the tales of the crew about the ports they have visited and the perils of the journey. They also reach out through attendance at conferences and through awareness workshops. They mention going to California League of Middle School events. They use SIP funds and other special resources as contributions to the cause. They read what has been written: how have others charted the waters; what are the landmarks; what are the dangers; what are the opportunities? These ships are not alone at sea. Others have made the voyage ahead of them; many are making it now.

Think back for a moment over the many cases presented earlier in this book. Some kinds of contact occurred repeatedly. Rather than repeat them, we invite you to look back and examine the various ways ships have used contacts such as these:

- Site visits (How do schools make best use of these visits?)
- *Caught in the Middle* and other documents (What do they read first; how do they involve staff in the reading?)
- Program Quality Review (How does this process provide direction and mobilize energy?)
- California League of Middle School events (How do these events provide vision and support?)

In this section we present two more elaborate examples of how schools can work together as they make the journey of middle grades reform. The first case, **County Middle Grades Study Group**, describes how the schools in one county have formed an ongoing support network. The second case, **A Multi-School Effort Promoting Interdisciplinary Teaming and Integrated Curriculum**, describes a cooperative staff development effort. In both cases, a group of schools has decided to form a fleet. They have set up long-term arrangements for collaboration, a mutual support system, and a means of assistance as they make the journey together.

As you read each of the following two cases, consider how the arrangement came into being. What does an individual school get out of it? What does an individual school put into it? What elements are critical to keeping the arrangement going?

COUNTY MIDDLE GRADES STUDY GROUP

California school districts have taken various approaches to facilitate the implementation of recommendations from *Caught in the Middle* including conducting inservices, planning site visitations, establishing staff development programs, and hiring consultants, to name just a few. Recognizing that factors such as size often preclude some districts from the luxury of full-fledged programs, Anybodycan County Office has developed a unique means of providing support and networking for administrators as they go through the change process in their schools.

Once a month, middle school administrators and support district staff are invited to attend a two-hour study group, held at one of the middle schools in the county. The purpose of the meeting? To create a time and place where administrators can talk together about middle school problems, programs, concerns, and direction.

Initially, the idea for establishing a study group began three years ago with one of the principals who had coordinated speakers for the California League of Middle Schools. She had held meetings with county middle school principals to plan, implement, and evaluate topics and speakers. She found the networking to be invaluable in accomplishing her task, and commented to the group that it would be nice to continue the process. Simultaneously, the County Coordinator for the Consolidated Application Cooperative (Instructional Services Division), because of his close connection with the twenty districts in the county, was given the job of starting a task force of middle school personnel.

An initial planning group held a series of meetings. Included in the group were the County Coordinator, local administrators, and a representative of the California League of Middle Schools. Through a series of discussions, the planning group validated the need for networking and identified some purposes for a county-wide study group: building awareness of the characteristics of middle schools in the county; presenting problems and concerns for mutual exploration and possible resolution; sharing current middle level practices; and securing information related to staff development, curriculum improvement, and other related middle level activities.

The County Coordinator has assumed responsibility for notifying administrators of the date, time, and place of each meeting. His mailing list includes all middle school principals, K-8 principals, staff development personnel, project directors, and anyone else who is involved with middle school curriculum. The Coordinator has also made a point of inviting various personnel from neighboring counties to attend, thinking that there is a lot

of sharing that could be achieved this way. Approximately one-third of the sixty-five people invited attend each meeting. It is not always the same people who attend each meeting, although there are several who attend regularly.

Originally, meetings were held bi-monthly, but because of the overwhelmingly positive response to the program, meetings are now held every month. Each month, a principal volunteers to host the next meeting at his/her school. Each meeting, then, begins with the hosting principal describing his/her school and some of what is being done in the school.

Topics during the meetings have included disaster preparedness plans, teacher observations, Foundation and Partnership School selection, English-Language Arts Framework implementation, heterogeneous grouping practices, Program Quality Preview preparation, creative financing of student activities, interdisciplinary teaming mechanics, middle school schedule-building, tracking, and advisement program curricula. As the County Coordinator commented, "The flavor of the group comes through. They provide their own show!"

During one meeting, one of the principals suggested that everyone should come prepared the following session with thirty or forty copies of the various awards systems in each school. Since then, the group determines at each meeting what they want to share at the next meeting. This has proven to be a valuable resource, useful and profitable to members.

The study group uses *Caught in the Middle* as its resource document, but includes other literature as needed. Strong connections and liaison ties are maintained with the California League of Middle Schools, ACSA, local universities, parent groups, and anyone else interested in sharing middle level practices. One intention of the group is to provide ongoing and diverse networking with various forums. Ultimately, the County Coordinator would like to see the concept expanded to become a regional network.

Principals have found the study group to be very useful. One commented, "I am the only middle level principal in a K-8 district. This gives me an opportunity to share, to keep up with what is happening out there, and to bounce some of my ideas off other administrators." Another commented, "I feel that I can talk to my peers in safety, in a non-threatening atmosphere." And another talked about the value of being able to "talk openly." The County Coordinator indicated that principals were very pleased with the meetings. "They view these meetings as a place to be with new friends and to share, to talk about problems they won't talk about with upper level district people."

Administrators, like the "crew" of the school, benefit from support and collegiality. How might the process of change be expanded by this type of support?

In this case the county office staff person took a lead role in coordinating the meetings of the group. As you think about your school and district, where else might you consider looking for this type of support? What other resources could you draw upon?

Some people have said that there are particular advantages to getting a group together from different districts, rather than several schools from the same district. What do you think?

A MULTI-SCHOOL EFFORT PROMOTING INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMING AND INTEGRATING CURRICULUM

As a member of California's Middle Grades Task Force, I contributed to the report, *Caught in the Middle*, and I am currently facilitating the joint effort of ten schools from several districts interested in implementing some of the ideas in that report. They meet periodically to devise ways to integrate the curriculum through joint team projects carried out by students at the end of the year. These projects are "action-based" in that students create solutions to problems in today's world of particular concern to them and take personal action to put their plans in motion. For instance, two or three students concerned about drug abuse might, after thoroughly researching the topic, present a series of sessions to younger students, describing the effects of drug abuse and helping them role play effective responses to outside pressures to take drugs. Or they might present a set of recommendations to the school board concerning ways to keep drugs off campus.

To prepare students to carry out such projects, teachers must design both team and classroom curriculum plans and develop new instructional and management techniques. By bringing together a group of highly creative and enthusiastic individuals, this multi-school effort provides teachers with a rich fund of ideas, as well as the strong source of encouragement and moral support they need to work this out.

Each school sends one viable interdisciplinary team to a series of working sessions, spaced a month or so apart. The teams are comprised of three to five members, representing the major disciplines, plus one administrator who provides both practical and symbolic district support. To qualify as a viable team, they must share the same students and the same continuous block of time, and they must have autonomy over scheduling. Since members of these initial teams are among the most innovative and influential teachers at their school, we are building from strength to develop models for effective classroom and teaming practices, and we are preparing a cadre of change agents for future expansion.

A planning committee of three teachers meets with me between sessions to point out what they need in a practical sense during the next session and to help sketch out a schedule of activities. In some instances they agree to lead an activity or to design and present a chart or form they have suggested we use. Their input has been extremely valuable, and the experience they are gaining prepares them to eventually take over my role as facilitator of this multi-school effort.

The focus of the working sessions changes as the year progresses. Throughout, individuals draw on the expertise of their subject area colleagues from

the several schools as well as the members of their own team. Team planning begins as they poll their students to discover their most pressing concerns. Through this they find that students are interested in such diverse topics as family relationships, drug abuse, teen age gangs, earthquake preparedness, global warming, and so forth. Since new concerns will arise as world events continue to unfold, they must determine what "generic" skills and concepts students will need to carry out an action-based project on any topic they select. By creating and analyzing several examples, they find that students will need to take oral histories; conduct opinion surveys; create charts, graphs, and models; make contact with appropriate civic groups or governmental agencies; prepare multi-media presentations and so forth. Once they have sorted out these basic processes, team members divide up responsibility for developing them, with each taking those most compatible with their discipline. Individuals then meet with their subject area colleagues to plan how they might develop the skills and concepts assigned to them. They will do this through a series of relatively less complex, benchmark projects based on the content they were already planning to teach. Thus, moving back and forth between their team and subject specific planning groups, they create a yearlong curriculum plan in which, while retaining their established course outline, they will now pause periodically to allow for more active and varied student participation.

With tentative plans in place, they begin to concentrate on implementation —or more precisely, experimentation. Again alternating between meetings with their team and subject area colleagues, teachers share stories of the trial and error process they are going through as they work out the strategies needed to monitor and guide students within this active curriculum. They describe and perhaps demonstrate effective strategies and help one another think through possible solutions to difficulties they encounter.

Participants carry out assignments between sessions and use the results when they reconvene. Following the first session, for example, teams conduct student interest surveys and report the results at the next. Between the second and third sessions, each team member plans a schedule of benchmark activities and works from it during the next. Individual tell their team members at the end of each session what new strategies they will experiment with between sessions and report back to them during the next. These follow-up activities help keep the momentum going by assuring that experimentation and the exchange of ideas takes place. Without such personal and team accountability, participants may leave the sessions full of new ideas and good intentions but, caught up in the pressure of outside concerns, never quite get around to acting on them.

This multi-school effort grew out of requests from a few principals for help in moving their schools into an interdisciplinary project approach. Their requests varied. One intended to move the entire staff in this direction, but only planned for a two hour presentation; another wanted a series of

workshops for the entire staff; still another wanted me to work with one team intensively over the entire year.

I hesitated. I could see that they faced a dilemma much the same as a teacher who tries to teach to the total class. How do you pace the activities--do you move quickly enough to keep up with those farther along, slowly enough for those least ready, or do you aim somewhere in the middle? Aiming high with the entire staff is most risky. The changes advocated here represent a radical departure for many teachers, and the first few breaking this new ground must be willing and able to give it a good try. But is the percentage of such teachers high enough in any one school to pull it off? If not, what would it be like to face a wary staff of "reluctant learners" throughout the year? And if a principal narrowed the audience to one team, where would the inspiration and excitement come from in such a small group? And how could I—alone—give each teacher the help I knew they needed in each of the four disciplines? Finally, was going from school to school all year long really the best, most effective use of my time? I countered with the idea of a multi-school approach.

As with any new effort, we learned many things the first time around. The one most pertinent here has to do with the composition of the group. Two aspects of joint team projects need to be worked out—issues related to the projects and issues related to teaming. Teachers can take on both at once, but a group should not be mixed, with some teachers focusing only on projects and others working on both projects and teaming. This became apparent as I worked with two groups last year, a total of eight schools. The makeup of these two groups was quite different, and their experiences differed accordingly. The first was comprised of four unofficial interdisciplinary teams. While they were not yet sharing the same students, planning had begun for the restructuring necessary for them to become viable teams the following year. The other group was mixed, with viable teams from three schools and non-teamed teachers from a school which had no definite plans for restructuring any time soon.

Things went very smoothly for the first group. Knowing that they would be forming viable teams the following year, they had a real interest in exploring the project approach as it might expand within a team structure. Yet that aspect of it was not of enough immediate, pressing concern to draw their attention away from classroom issues. They concentrated on working out strategies related to projects in their own classrooms, with an eye to how beingpart of a team might affect these later. They shared ideas with enthusiasm and engaged in some hypothetical team planning as a rehearsal of the roles they would be carrying out the following year.

The second group encountered some difficulty. Being in a group where actual team planning was taking place, some of the non-teamed teachers focused much of their energy not on their own planning but on whether they

would ever be a part of a team. Perhaps watching actual teams in operation, they felt an urgency to get on with that aspect of it. Or, perhaps recognizing they benefits of teaming—seeing that teams were able to break down the barriers of the fifty minute class period and also reduce the number of student projects each must oversee—made the difficulty of doing it alone seem too great. In any case, as the year drew to a close and it became apparent that the necessary school restructuring would not take place, it became more and more difficult for the non-teamed teachers to concentrate on making changes within their own classroom. Some became impatient and discouraged.

Having worked with many non-teamed teachers over the years, I found this group's experience unusual, and I think they would have reacted more positively alone or in a group with other teachers in a similar school situation. So, participation in this year's multi-school group is open only to viable teams, and I work with others independently.

The results from last year's effort are very promising. Not only are early reports of both teacher and student enthusiasm for action-based projects in the middle school very encouraging, but the reform effort is already expanding. Teams from last year are now successfully helping other teachers in their school move in this direction. In some cases the original team has split into four, with each of its members forming the core of a new team. In others, the original team has remained intact, but guides one or more new teams as they form independently. In any case, given that they have a supportive environment to return to, being part of a multi-school reform process seems to have helped provide participants with the expertise and inspiration not only to begin transforming their own classrooms, but influencing and helping others to do the same.

This case describes collaborative strategies for school teams that provide them with both instructional and professional support. Why is this a good idea?

How does the composition of each school team contribute to the success of the strategy? If you were sending a team from your school, who would you send? Why?

What support would your team need at the school site?

What about the rest of the staff? How would you keep them informed? When and how would you bring others into this process?

Ship's Logs

The last chapter highlighted individual elements of the nautical metaphor or specific aspects of the change process. In this section, we return to longer and more comprehensive stories. As in the Crystal case, the two cases in this section give a more detailed account of how things changed over time. They allow the reader to examine and reflect on how the elements of the metaphor come together. This is certainly not a simple linear process; instead, the elements come in and out of focus, often several times, as priorities shift and progress is made.

Unlike previous sections, these two cases are presented without commentary. They stand on their own as records of journeys in progress, ship's logs. Envision your own journey, look for old themes and new variations, as you read about **Sands Middle School**, where a new principal moved quickly to make changes, and **Drake School**, a K-8 school where shared decision-making and teaming have affected the whole school.

A CHANGE IN THE WINDS:

Sands Middle School

Sands Middle School was a middle school in name only until April of 1986. It did an adequate, perhaps even above average, job of educating its 875 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The background of the students, from a middle to upper class desert community, made the school's job easier and contributed to the feeling that things were all right at Sands. But in many ways staff and students were going through the motions, following traditional patterns of schooling, without any special spark or enthusiasm.

In April of 1986, a new principal arrived on the scene and brought with her some new ideas. Although this was her first position as principal of a middle school, Alice Eckels had a broad and varied background in education. She had worked in educational research and development and had a thorough familiarity with the writings on middle grades reform. She set about creating a middle school newly "dedicated to serving the needs of middle grade students."

The previous principal of Sands had moved to a new job in October, 1985. Following a search, Alice Eckels was hired in the spring. Once she knew of her assignment, Alice visited the school and classrooms to get an idea of what she was walking into. She took stock and decided to act quickly.

At the first faculty meeting with the staff in the spring of 1986, she explained to the group that the school was nicely established but that there were problems in existence. She asked the staff to brainstorm a list of problems and list what makes it difficult to teach in a middle school. A separate list was generated about what were the characteristics of middle grade students. The next question was, "How long have these things been true?" In other words, she asked them to note the "way things are for middle grade students." Once that was done she explained that as a staff they needed to address the education at this level and work within the reality that students are basically at risk in all areas: educationally, emotionally, physically, psychologically, and socially. These needs must be addressed in the school program.

Between the first staff meeting and the second staff meeting, Alice needed to make many decisions. She explained at the second staff meeting that all decisions were made in the interest of what was best for the educational development of students. An example of such a decision was her response to a teacher who needed a room change. The room change was denied because the teacher could not give a reason why this was best for the educational development of students. This set the tone for many decisions that followed.

The remainder of the year passed quickly. Alice spent every possible minute with staff members informally asking questions and discussing possible middle school elements such as advisory, exploratory, flexible modular scheduling, interdisciplinary teaming or upgrading the whole school. In June a minimum day was established for the staff to work on solutions for the many problems that existed. Alice proposed a list of possible solutions, such as an advisory program, exploratory program, flexible modular scheduling, upgrading the whole school and interdisciplinary teaming. Each of the potential solutions was explained. Alice organized the staff into committees with natural leaders and resisters present on each committee. The committees discussed, prioritized, and made decisions that day.

Two changes were decided upon for the following fall: 1) the sixth-grade students, who were isolated from the other students, would be incorporated into the whole school for lunch and physical education classes; 2) an exploratory program would be introduced. This program was to be held two days a week. The regular classes for those two days would be were shortened to give time to the exploratory classes. Teachers would develop the exploratory program with the help of criteria developed by Alice.

Changes did happen. In the fall of 1986 the exploratory program and upgrading of school activities were in place. The teachers came up with a listing of 30 courses which ranged from: *Earn an "A" to Easy Art for Fun.* For the exploratory program each student was given the opportunity to select 4 exploratory classes for the year. No course could be repeated by a student.

During the school year, the staff met on a regular basis once or twice a month. During these meetings the teachers had a chance to voice concerns and discuss problems with the school and among the students. Alice continued to meet informally with groups of teachers to dialogue about middle school students and their needs. She continued to visit classes. In addition she arranged for curricular meetings by providing substitutes for an entire curricular area to meet uninterrupted for three hours. At the curricular department meetings the discussion focused on the need for an advisory and core concepts.

Caught in the Middle was published in 1987. Alice secured 30 copies and made these available to interested teachers wishing to read it. Dialogue about the concepts from *Caught In The Middle* became part of the focus for the visits and meetings. For example, one team of social studies and language arts teachers was formed to begin the first interdisciplinary team.

By the end of the year the staff was ready to say yes to an advisory program. The staff wrote for a grant requesting $1,500 from the California State Department of Education for at-risk students. This was based on the

knowledge that all middle grade students are at risk in all aspects. The money was awarded to Sands. This funding provided a small group of leaders, along with one resistant teacher, the means to visit other schools with advisory programs and to purchase sample advisory programs.

During the summer, a small number of teachers worked for a week to organize the lessons for the new advisory. One week was not enough time. It provided the materials needed for the opening of school. Assembling the rest of the lessons became a yearlong project. Alice herself agreed to take one advisory class. These classes were held two days a week before lunch for 30 minutes and for 10 minutes on the other days. Students of grades six, seven and eight were mixed together for instruction. The units included trust building activities, housekeeping, and concerns that fell under the category called "the heart of the matter." This year was rough. The materials were being tried for the first time and needed further refinement. In spite of the difficulties, two-thirds of the staff agreed the student grades had improved and there was a reduction in student referrals.

The second year for the advisory was better. A new counselor rewrote the materials and gave the staff inservice on how to use them. Additional inservice was provided by a representative of a local high school district. The advisory classes were unmixed so that a teacher taught one grade level and this teacher would continue with this group as long as the students were in school. Once the materials were revised and the inservice sessions were held, the advisory program became very effective.

The third year brought more changes. We talk about apples for teachers. The school has for the students and to help support the core classes core classes there is a PIP group in the center of the core. This group works especially with the core courses and curriculum. This PIP group is a set of teachers from grade six, seven and eight teachers who are natural leaders. This group meets each Tuesday and has an extra preparation period to substitute for teachers, work in a core or visit a core class. This group reviews the concerns of the other teachers and works toward better horizontal and vertical articulation for all grades. The PIPs also call meetings for the core teachers.

Sands Middle School is a school in transition. Next year the staff is acting on bilingual education and higher order thinking skills for all subjects. The core groups are changing and expanding.

The staff is committed to working together. The success is happening because Alice Eckels has worked hard to develop the teaming of teachers and to bring new concepts to the school. She believes that leadership means that you care for people and stand up for what is right. Leadership is not a process. Being in a school as a principal is the best place to bring about change for success.

THE MIDDLE GRADE ORGANIZATION IN A K-8 SCHOOL: THE TEAM APPROACH

Drake School

This case study is about the implementation of a middle grade organization in the sixth through eighth grades in a K-8 school. The superintendent/principal restructured the one school district by building a team and developing shared decision-making as the strategy for change.

California Superintendent of Schools, Bill Honig, in his summer message to educators, devoted a whole issue of *The New California Schools* (Vol. VII, No. 1) to "Restructuring our Educational System." He defined restructuring as "broad scale change in how teachers, principals, and school districts operate daily to improve student achievement." (p.1) And he went on to state that "it is an attempt to unleash the creativity, energy, and intelligence of school and district staff so that students thrive. It means focusing on performance; getting away from bureaucratic rigidity; and encouraging experimentation, innovation, and risk taking." (p.1)

Joanne Arhar in her article "New Role for Teachers at the Middle Level" published in the California League of Middle Schools *The Middle Level News* (Vol. 9, No. 1, Sept. 1989) refers to *Caught in the Middle* where it recommends interdisciplinary teams for teachers and students as an organizational strategy positively associated with student achievement, personal development, learning climate, faculty morale, and staff development. (p.1) She goes on to point out that teaming increases a teacher's sense of efficacy which is positively associated with student achievement. And, "it gives teachers the opportunity to group and schedule students, and to share resources, time, and space. It allows teachers to develop a sense of community with students, parent, faculty outside of the team, administration, and the community at large. . .skills and knowledge in group process, interpersonal relations and organizational development will come to play an important part on teacher teams." (p.4)

Bill Honig looks to "restructuring" as the means to improving the climate of education and to increasing student achievement. Joanne Arhar has found the environment for this restructuring in the organization of the true middle school and in particular through teaming. This becomes clearer when she cites Ashton and Webb's research (1986) that found the features associated with interdisciplinary teams such as teacher teams, advisor-advisee programs, and multi-age grouping along with clear and shared educational aims as ingredients to increase teachers sense of efficacy. (p.1)

If we were to step back to 1984 to Peters and Waterman's *In Search ofExcellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* and analyze their excellence qualities we would find the concepts of restructuring and teaming. We would read about: (1) a fluid organizational structure, (2) a

"do" rather than "study" philosophy, (3) the best innovation coming from small groups working on problems, (4) an obsession with quality, (5) intense but informal communication, (6) if you're not making mistakes, you're not making decisions, (7) treating employees as adults, (8) giving practical autonomy, (9) providing for hoopla and celebration, (10) discussing openly how the company is doing, (11) demanding management contacts with employees, (12) keeping the organizational structure simple, having few administrators, and very few middle mangers. If these concepts were applied to education, the product would be student achievement; in business it is profit.

This case study is about a K-8 school in a one-school district. It is in an upscale rural suburban community that has infused the spirit of middle school into its K-8 school environment. The spirit of middle school is people working together as a team with a considerable amount of autonomy to make decisions. The magic in middle school is the word "team"--teachers working with the same group of students to improve student self-esteem, which in turn improves student performance. Joanne Arhar writes that the culture of teaching is "characterized by a work environment based on norms of non-interference" and privacy. (p.4) She goes on to say that "teacher generally practice their craft in isolation." (p.4) But the true middle school is the antithesis of an approach typified by isolation and privacy. Because the enthusiasm of this writer may give the appearance that all is perfect in his school, it needs to be stated that nothing is perfect, not even in this K-8 school. But, hopefully, there is a common interest on the part of the staff to continually work toward improvement. More importantly, there is honesty on the part of the board and administration and there is a trusting staff.

The school was not always that way. When the administrator who is both a superintendent and a principal arrived in the summer of '86, things were less than perfect. Negotiations were still ongoing and adversarial. Staff morale was low and the community was on its way to leaving the school for private school. (And in this community the threat to leave for private school was not idle; in fact, some parents could afford to buy the private school.)

Peters and Waterman report that each great leader of a successful company was a pathfinder with a vision. These leaders were great implementers who attended to detail. They were highly visible and familiar with day-to-day operations. Peters and Waterman go on to state that great leaders were charismatic, exciting, evangelistic individuals who breathed life into the organization. Educational research states that leadership makes the difference in highly effective schools.The concept of vision is important. Without it, the organization remains stagnant or slow moving and very ordinary. It is incapable of capturing the staff and community energy. The school administrator has to have vision and the charisma to make it happen. The question is, how do you get the staff to buy in?

The first step for the new administrator was to ask his staff what they expected of the superintendent/principal. At the first staff meeting prior to the opening of school, he passed out index cards and asked that question. The only proviso was one idea to a card so that the ideas could be easily sorted and summarized for a staff discussion the next day. The feedback included a consensus of statements in which teachers expressed the need for strong leadership, administrative support, renewed student discipline, curriculum continuity and development, the improvement of the middle grade program, less rules and bureaucracy, administrator honesty, and administrator visibility.

That evening the administrator summarized the ideas and wrote direct statements from the cards on large sheets of paper. The next morning, he posted them in the meeting room where a second discussion was held. It was somewhat cathartic, but he clarified the ideas on the cards and began the process to set goals. More important than the goals, this exercise began two important steps. First, the administrator proved his honesty. He was open and willing to listen, and he promised action. Later, he would be judged by his actions to deliver. Second, the staff needs were in fact a good part of his vision. Since these needs became the school goals, he began the process of buy-in. The move to restructuring was not without pain. There would be heated discussions, misunderstandings, challenges, and hurt feelings. The administrator listened patiently, didn't overreact, and modified the plans. Sometimes it was important to compromise and to settle for a portion of a plan rather than push too hard for the whole package. Generally compromise leads to consensus and to staff support.

Bill Honig, in his summer message, says restructuring takes years to show real progress. His message is a little harsh because progress comes in little chunks and continuously. It takes a while to put the staff distrust aside. Negotiations did end, but not without labor and turmoil. In the subsequent years it became easier, until finally in 1988 negotiations spanned all of two sessions for a total of seven hours—a real sign of progress.

One of the major goals of the first year was the improvement of the middle grade program. A task force was formed to include middle level teachers and parents as well as K-5 teaching staff. This was important because the K-5 staff looked at the middle level teachers as having a soft touch, becauseclasses such as foreign language, instrumental music, and some academic classes were smaller in size than their self-contained class. Teachers also had no understanding of the characteristics of the middle-grade child and the instructional challenges he or she posed. The task force was charged to improve the middle grade program. Activities included writing a mission statement and a philosophy. The task force visited exemplary programs and began to recommend changes to the middle grade instructional program and schedule.

A major recommendation was the implementation of student advisement. The more the task force visited, the more they were convinced that the QUEST curriculum-based guidance program was the key ingredient for the school's advisement program. They also recommended that each class have an advisor who, in turn, taught QUEST and monitored student academic progress and behavior. Also, this person would be the key communicator with parents and other teachers. The program is now in its third year. The school was fortunate to have the resources to designate one teacher (the half-time special education teacher) to be a half-time Learning-Guidance Specialist for grades five through eight. This person is the lead advisor who works with the other advisors, teaches, parents, and students and who oversees academic progress and student behavior. Many times she helps with difficult situations between parents and teachers, and assists teachers to modify assignments or to change discipline or instructional strategies. Moreover, she helps middle grade students during difficult times, especially with social problems that arise with their peer group. The program has been expanded to include peer tutoring and an Active Parenting seminar.

As the result of the success of the Learning-Guidance program, the Learning Guidance Specialist position was expanded to the K-4 grades using the half-time K-4 special education teacher as the lower grade Learning-Guidance Specialist. She teams with the middle grade Learning-Guidance Specialist. And the K-5 teachers have implemented the companion elementary school QUEST program.

An important component of the middle grade program has been the grade-level parent meetings held each year. These meetings focus on the characteristics of the middle-grade child, how the school has adjusted their program to these characteristics, and what parents should expect at home. Most parents just don't know what to expect, and when things get tough, they are inclined to blame the school. The meetings also covers academic and behavior expectations, how parents can communicate with the school, and off-school standards related to parties, homework, telephone use, and arrival time at home on school nights and weekends.

The single most important activity that was responsible for the school's transformation was the QUEST training required of teachers before the program could be implemented. The original four middle-level teachers were trained during the summer preceding the implementation of the program. The teachers were given an added incentive: though the district paid for the training and all related expenses, the superintendent/principal also granted units for salary improvement because teachers were giving up vacation time. The teachers came back from the training motivated to implement the QUEST program, but told the administrator that the schedule had to be restructured or the QUEST program would not work. Since it was August and too late for him to revise it, he suggested that they could

rework it. His only request was that they keep him posted so he could approve their modifications. And he did.

The QUEST program has been given credit for the transformation of the middle grade program as well as moving the total staff into a cooperative and collaborative direction. Teaming as defined in the middle grade literature was difficult to implement at this K-8 school. There is one class per grade level, so interdisciplinary teams are out of the question. What evolved were regular lunch meetings on the part of the middle grade staff to discuss students and the academic program. QUEST not only gave training in the guidance curriculum, but also training in group process skills. The middle grade teachers became a team.

The K-5 staff began to see the payoff and wanted their situation to be the same. They gave full credit to the QUEST program and wanted it, too. The QUEST program was expanded to the K-5 grades and now all the K-5 teachers have received the training and are in the process of implementing it. The K-5 staff has also seen the value of teaming, and teachers sharing the same grade level are now planning curriculum and sharing students. They are moving away from the isolation of the self-contained classroom.

A purpose of this case study was to demonstrate how the middle school teaming concept has made a profound effect on a school that is K-8. This case also demonstrates what can happen when an administrator and a school board have faith in the teaching staff to become problem solvers and decision makers.

At the first faculty meeting, the superintendent/principal established an interaction meeting format. Agendas are built by the staff, with each item identifying its owner, the needed time, and the desired outcome (discussion or action). The method for decision is consensus. Voting is not suitable because voting has winners and losers. The goal is to make decisions that everyone supports. Everyone has to give a little to make it work. This interactivemethod has become a model for committee meetings. The meeting's leader facilitates discussion, gives everyone a chance to participate and to reach consensus.

The administrator clarified the decision-making process: (1) he tells the staff that he needs to make a decision and needs their input; or (2) he explains the problem and makes the decision with them; or (3) he explains the problem and asks the staff to find a solution. Budgets are built and enrollment projections developed with staff input. Most program changes are made either by staff initiative or with their involvement. Interview panels always have three teachers and two parents. When things became hectic one summer, teachers were empowered to screen teaching candidates and run the interview panel with the full support of the superintendent/principal.

One outcome of the restructuring was renewed community support. The school has increased by fifty percent in four years, largely due to the spirit and enthusiasm of the staff.

Not only have Learning-Guidance Specialists been added, but so has a part-time Curriculum Specialist. The middle grade activities director has expanded duties to develop and oversee the middle school schedule. Other staff represent the district on a number of county-wide curriculum committees. Parents have initiated committees on enrichment and computers, after having brought their concerns to the staff and receiving staff support. The school exists on the energy of both the staff and the parent community. It could not thrive without this cooperative atmosphere.

There are two major activities that end the year. The staff has an opportunity to evaluate the superintendent/principal. In an activity he originated, the staff is asked to respond to two questions: What has the superintendent/principal done that you like? And what would you have him improve? Staff is asked to write on idea per card to help in the sorting. A teacher is selected to organize and type the cards. This helps to maintain anonymity. Each staff member is given a copy of the evaluation and it is then discussed at a faculty meeting. This begins the goal setting process for the coming school year.

The second major activity is a school board and staff retreat held a few weeks after the superintendent/principal's evaluation. A committee made up of teachers, a board member, and the superintendent/principal develops the agenda. The retreat is held off-campus during a late afternoon and early evening. The PTA provides snacks and dinner. The second year of the retreat included the PTA president and the School Site Committee chairperson. Ideas from the retreat are included in the district's goals, which are approved by the board in late summer. After the goals are implemented,the staff regularly meets to check progress and discuss timelines. Sometimes they find that what they have agreed to for the year is a little ambitious and must be reevaluated. They then go back to the school board and explain their reasons for modifying the goals.

The inspiration for this renewal was the move to the middle school concept. The middle school staff is labeled the "we" group by a specialist who works with both the K-5 and 6-8 staffs. He says that when he meets with the middle grade staff they are always trying to find solutions to problems that have the greatest benefit for the group, not just for the individual. They have implemented a two-period core of literature and English so that each class has the same teacher. All classes with the exception of math are heterogenous. Science and math classes are more hands-on. Advisement is twice a week for the full year. Parent meetings are held regularly. Peer tutors and student aides are an integral part of the school program.

What are the pitfalls? What goes wrong? Yes, there are problems. Did everyone fit the new approach or perform to expectations? No. Two teachers did not have their contracts renewed during their probationary period.

The informal power structure, the one that was there before, had to be dealt with delicately. When the staff asked for strong leadership, that meant some had to give up their power or at least share it. Where there was weak leadership previously, the staff built its own power structure in order to survive. The interaction approach at faculty meetings, where staff discusses issues and reaches consensus on solutions, helped. Involving these people on key committees gave them the opportunity to influence decisions. Sharing information with all staff put everyone on equal footing, because no one had inside information. With the growth of the school, new staff were hired who had no reason to align themselves with the informal power structure.

There is a caution in dealing with this notion of informal power. Since the system was being opened up, all staff were going to participate in solving problems. The informal power brokers only participated if they could manipulate decisions. They also undermined the administrator by going to parents, supervising administrators and the school board. Some organizations may be more ill than originally perceived by the administrator. Things went well for the superintendent/principal in his new position. Had they not, he would have sought help from an outside consultant, because solving these kinds of organizational problems were beyond his expertise.

Exuberance can also be a problem. The staff was motivated to bring about change. At first the number of goals was too many for one school year. While this is getting under better control, there is still a tendency to take onmore than can be accomplished. During this fourth year of the superintendent/principal's tenure, the staff meets periodically to discuss progress and to determine if the goals are achievable. The school board is open to adjustment. The staff is also spending more time during the summer working on curriculum projects needing short bursts of uninterrupted time. What is forgotten is that coupled with working on the goals are the necessary day-to-day activities that take time.

Parents' faith in the school is translated into greater participation. At this school, it has meant a revitalized School Site Council and participation on interview and curriculum committees. There are times the staff feels smothered by parents and use staff meeting time to assess the situation and make adjustments. But the positive side is parent trust and a willingness to provide staff with the resources to make teaching fun.

Disagreements and conflicts happen on this school site. They do not go away when there is a move to restructuring. However, an understanding to

agree that it is o.k. to disagree and participation in the process to solve problems helps solve these disputes.

This case has looked at the effects of middle grade teaming on the restructuring efforts of a K-8 school. The conclusion: the middle school organization within the K-8 setting with its emphasis on teaming has the friendliest environment for shared decision-making.

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